





SURA'S

# 108 ANECDOTES

in the lives of

# Great Leaders

*By*  
**Kolar Krishna Iyer**



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108 ANECDOTES IN THE LIVES OF GREAT LEADERS

By KOLAR KRISHNA IYER

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## **About the author**

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He has to his credit more than 300 children stories in Telugu, 100 stories in English published in almost all the children's magazines and the daily 'Deccan Herald' from Bangalore, during the last fifty years.

He has been giving broadcasts of children's stories from AIR Tirupati.



# 108 ANECDOTES

## in the lives of

# Great Leaders

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### 1. Koumudi the Patriot

**O**nce Mahatma Gandhiji, the father of our nation said: "The world does not know that behind my title 'Mahatma' are concealed the sacrifice made by unknown millions of men and women of our country. Women have made sacrifices and deeds exhibiting more bravery than men!"

One such brave girl is Koumudi, a patriot from Kerala. In the year 1934, Gandhiji while touring throughout the country to collect funds to help the Harijans reached a village called Badagiri in Kerala State.

Thousands of men and women gathered at a meeting to have a glimpse of Gandhiji and listen to his lecture. Gandhiji during the meeting made an appeal to the women folk to donate their gold and silver jewellery to the cause of the down-trodden. He said he would sell the jewellery and utilise the money for the noble cause. He appealed to the audience thus:

"My countrymen and women, in our country, there is nothing which women folk can claim to be their own. So, to part with whatever is in their possession, they have to obtain the permission of either parents or husbands.

In our country today millions of poor are starving and leading a miserable life. For us who are living in such a country, it is a crime and sin to decorate ourselves with gold and silver ornaments. If we could donate such ornaments for a noble cause, we would be doing a noble deed and serving our motherland.

I beseech you, the women folk to give me your ornaments. I will utilise them to banish the devil of untouchability and for the uplift and welfare of the poor Harijans."

As soon as Gandhiji finished his speech, a 16 year old girl came to the dais, handed over a small note book she was holding and requested Gandhiji for his autograph. Simultaneously she removed the only gold bangle from one of her hands and placed it into the Mahatma's hands.

Gandhiji smiled and took the note book from the girl. While he was signing his autograph, she took another bangle from her other hand and placed it before him.

"You needn't give me two bangles. One is enough", said Gandhiji smiling.

But the girl, Koumudi, ignoring his words, removed a gold chain from her neck and placed it also at the feet of Gandhiji.

Thundering applause resounded at her gesture.

Tears rolled down the cheeks of Gandhiji also.

He then asked her, "Have you obtained the consent of your parents for the sacrifice you are making?"

Without giving any reply, she removed her gold earrings also and gave them to Gandhiji amidst thundering claps again from the audience.

A person from the dais stood up and told Gandhiji: "Gandhiji, her father is here itself. He is auctioning the copies of the address presented to you. The proceeds will be donated to you. He is well known in these parts for his philanthropy."

Gandhiji again smiled and said to Koumudi: "Your sacrifice is incomplete without giving me an undertaking that you will not get these ornaments replaced."

Koumudi without any hesitation gave her undertaking.

But, Gandhiji did not leave it at that. He further questioned her: "Will not your mother get hurt if your neck, hands and ears are without any ornaments?"

"She may, Gandhiji, but I know well that yet she will not exert any pressure on me in this regard," replied Koumudi.

"What about your husband after marriage?" asked Gandhiji.

"I will not agree to marry such a person." assured Koumudi firmly with a mild smile.

Now Gandhiji's cup of joy was overflowing. He then wrote in her note book: "A brave girl from Kerala! All the ornaments you have donated is no match to your sacrifice. Let the precious jewel of sacrifice adorn you forever."



## 2. Gandhiji and a Time-piece

**Note :** The Compiler of these anecdotes in this book was a witness to this anecdote and is narrating the same.

**T**his is not a story but a part of the biography of an ordinary boy who came under the spell of Bapuji in his ashram at Sabarmati and he later rose to become one of his most trusted disciples. Unfortunately, this chronicle with a moral lesson, has gone unrecorded like many in Bapuji's life.

The boy was one Joseph. He was a year or two senior to me, in my high school at Anantapur in the latter part of 1930's. He was the only son of his mother who was an Ayah in the local government hospital. His father had died. The boy was perhaps below average in his studies. He was slim and short. He, however, was a gifted singer and an actor too.

I remember him playing the part of Anjaneya in the annual school drama LAVA KUSA. He played the part with such devotion and this was perhaps an indication of his devotion to his master in the coming years of his life. He won the prize for the best actor in the drama and was awarded Gandhiji's "MY EXPERIMENTS WITH TRUTH" book. Perhaps due to the influence of that book coupled with other domestic problems, on a summer day after the S.S.L.C public examinations were over, he boarded the Delhi Express and got down at Wardha and straightway went to Bapuji's ashram.

He met Bapuji, confessed without any reservation all his short-comings and expressed his desire to join the ashram and serve the mankind under his guidance. Bapuji was so impressed with his sincerity and honesty in confessing even personal short-comings, that he gave him a shelter in his Sabarmati ashram on probation. He renamed him Prabhakar, who later on became Prabhakarji, an intimate disciple of Bapuji and Sarvodaya leader. He used to sing devotional songs at the prayer meetings of Bapuji.

Our high school where Prabhakarji studied, felt very proud of him and invited him with a few of his colleagues in the ashram to spend a day or two in social constructive work like removal of untouchability and keeping the town clean. I remember very well how we all students then took part in sweeping the streets of the town with joy and pride.

I still remember an incident that took place during his visit to our school. There is a great moral lesson behind this anecdote which I shall narrate it.

Prabhakarji and his party were very punctual and time-conscious in all their daily activities. They requisitioned a table time-piece for this purpose and one of our teachers provided a time-piece from his house. Unfortunately, after their sojourn to our school at Anantapur, the party left for Sabarmati. The time-piece inadvertently went into their baggage and reached the ashram. Perhaps it was its luck! But, the luck was very short-lived. When the baggage was opened, the time-piece was noticed to the consternation of all the members of the party. As was the wont in the discipline of the ashram, it was brought to the notice of

Bapuji who became annoyed and perturbed. He immediately expressed his anguish and told Prabhakarji who offered to send it back by postal parcel and an apology.

"No, Prabhakar, I would prefer you to go to Anantapur personally and hand over the time-piece with an apology not only on behalf of you all but on my own behalf! It is immaterial for me whether the time-piece was brought inadvertently or deliberately. It is other's property and we have deprived him of his property. What inconvenience the owner of it might have felt, as it is a very important article of everyday use to him! You are all guilty of negligence. You should have checked your baggage before you left that place."

Prabhakarji pleaded.

"Oh Master, I feel my visit to Anantapur involves waste of money and time. Can we not return it by post and apologize?"

"No" Bapuji was firm. He said.

"If you feel that it is to be a waste of money, I suggest you to forego your night meal for a fortnight and save the money to be spent for your journey to Anantapur and back. You will never then repeat this negligence in your life."

Prabhakarji came back to Anantapur personally to hand over the time-piece with an apology. As an old friend of mine, Prabhakarji later met me and narrated this anecdote saying:

"This is the sort of discipline to which we are put in Bapuji's ashram."





### 3. Gandhiji and Kastur Ba

Once very distinguished guests, among whom was the late Pandit Motilal Nehru, were due to arrive at the Satyagraha Ashram where Gandhiji was staying. Gandhiji wanted lunch to be prepared for them.

Kastur Ba, wife of Gandhiji, was incharge of the kitchen. She had to cook for and feed besides her husband, grandchildren and some twenty other inmates of the Ashram. She was assisted by a few ashramites but she was the chief cook.

On that particular day 'Ba' as Kastur Ba was called, was very tired and also a little indisposed. She went and lay down in her room.

Gandhiji approached the kitchen and beckoned to the young assistant. He spoke in a whisper not to disturb Ba in the adjoining room. He told the assistant that important guests were arriving and lunch had to be prepared for them.

He glanced at Ba's room. She was sleeping.

"Do not disturb her. Summon Kusum, light the fire, chop vegetables and knead the flour for the chapaties. Send for Ba only when she is needed. And mind you, do not irritate her. You will deserve a prize if Ba does not go for me," he told the assistant smiling.

The young assistant and Kusum began to prepare the lunch as noiselessly as possible. And then as ill-luck would have it, a brass plate crashed to the floor. The din woke up

Ba. She rushed into the kitchen to see what had happened. Kusum explained gently to her about Gandhiji's instructions to them.

"Why did you not send for me?" she demanded.

"You think I cannot manage this extra work?"

"No, Ba", explained the assistant again.

"We intended to summon you when everything was ready."

Ba was shrouder than one thought. She knew Gandhiji had arranged the whole thing. At night, after prayers, when all guests had left, she faced Gandhiji unexpectedly. She stood before him, with arms akimbo, and a mischievous light in her eyes.

"Why did you ask them to do the work without me? You think I am such a bag of lazybones?"

Gandhiji replied with an answering twinkle. Don't you know Ba, I am afraid of you on such occasions?

Ba gave out a quiet peal of incredulous laughter, as if to say, "What! You afraid of me?"

Gandhiji was afraid of none. But, if he was afraid of anyone, it was the little indomitable woman, Ba, his wife. His love for his wife was such.



## 4. Gandhiji and the Bridal Chamber

*"If I had no sense of humour, I would long ago have committed suicide"*

- Mahatma Gandhi

Once Gandhiji accompanied by Padit Jawaharlal Nehru was arriving on a three-day visit to Santiniketan, the university campus of the great poet Rabindranath Tagore, the Gurudev.

The guest house was soon set in readiness. The reception was to be held at Gurudev's beautiful little cottage. After the reception Gandhiji would be taken to the guest house in procession with the boys and the girls chanting the soul-stirring melodies of the Santiniketan.

One room in the guest house was set apart for Bapuji. The students of Santiniketan, renowned 'Kala Bhavan' artists, all, set about decorating it. They made of it a thing of enchanting loveliness looking like a bridal chamber.

Gandhiji arrived early one morning. With Bapuji were Jawaharlal, Mahadav Desai and Satis Babu of Khadi Pratisthan.

After the reception, Gurudev led Gandhiji to the room set apart for him. Bapuji stepped across the threshold, took one glance at the resplendent decorations and burst into peal and peal of laughter.

"What is all this?" he demanded, "Why brought me to this bridal chamber?"

Gurudev joined in the joke.

"Please remember you are in the abode of a poet," he said.

Gandhiji would not give in.

"Well where then is the bride?" he queried with irresponsible merriment.

Gurudev replied:

"Santiniketan, the ever young queen of our hearts, welcomes you"

"But, surely, she would hardly care to look twice at the old toothless pauper that I am!"

"No," rejoined Gurudev. "Our queen has loved truth and worshipped it unreservedly all these long years."

"So," said Bapuji, "there is hope for the toothless old man."

Early next morning Gurudev strolled to the guest house with all a host's anxiety and solicitude for his visitors' comfort. He passed on to Bapuji's room.

What a sight, alas met his eyes.

All the adornments were thrown helter-skelter. The cot had been dragged out into open terrace, for Bapuji always slept under the open sky. The racks and furniture had been pushed into a corner to make room for spinning wheels and a heap of files.

Now it was Gurudev's turn to laugh.

"Where is the bridal chamber gone to? The bridegroom I see is here, but the poor bride fled?"

Gandhiji as he stood up to receive Gurudev said with an answering burst of merriment.

"But I warned you, the bride would not care to look at an old toothless man."



## 5. Gandhiji and a Pencil

Once Meera Ben, a close associate of Gandhiji in his Sabarmati ashram, saw him diligently searching for something. He also worried. She asked him:

"Bapuji, what precious thing are you searching? You look worried also!"

"A pencil!" said Gandhiji still immersed in his search.

"How big is it?" she asked.

"A small one, the size of my thumb!" replied Gandhiji.

She was surprised and smiled. Everybody in the ashram around him were also wondering why he was so particular about a small bit of pencil.

One of the ashramites brought a new pencil and offered it to Gandhiji. He was visibly annoyed.

"Did I ask you to fetch me a new pencil?" he rebuked him.

Gandhiji went on searching for the missing bit of pencil still at last he found it in a bundle of paper.

"Here it is. I have found it" smiled Gandhiji with great glee of delight.

He never tolerated anything being misplaced and left untraced and thus wasted through negligence.

There was another incident of similar nature equally amusing yet instructive.

Gandhiji used to take a spoonful of honey everyday along with his meal. Once Meera Ben who was attending on Gandhiji forgot to bring the honey bottle while they went on a camp to some town. So he got a new bottle of honey purchased locally. Gandhiji noticed the new bottle. He asked her:

"What has happened to the other bottle we are using at the ashram?"

"I forgot to bring it from ashram, Babu" she replied casually.

Gandhiji was visibly annoyed.

"Should the honey in the old bottle go waste?" he asked and decided not to take the honey from the new bottle till he returned to the ashram and used fully the honey in the old bottle.

Gandhiji, the father of our nation hated to waste anything, no matter how small it was.



## 6. Gandhiji's Favourite Song

**G**andhiji strongly believed in returning good for evil. He followed this dictum throughout his life. It was from some Gujarati lines that Gandhiji got this inspiration.

For a bowl of water, give all that one can eat  
 For a word of kindness, bend down and kiss one's feet  
 For the smallest coin, pay back with all your wealth  
 And if your life is saved, give all that is your self.  
 To show that truth is what you most believe  
 Give back ten times more than what you do receive  
 But better still by far, forget what you have had;  
 What you would do for good, do just as much for bad.

Another anecdote that had lasting impression on Gandhiji was the Sermon on the Mountain in the Bible and especially these words of Jesus:

"Do not hit back at that which is evil. If some one hits you on the right cheek turn and let him hit the other cheek also. If any one takes away your coat, let him have your shirt too."



## 7. Gandhiji Confesses a Sin

**G**andhiji and a relative of him became interested in smoking. But, they had no money to buy cigarettes. They used to smoke the little pieces of butts of cigarettes that were left after Gandhiji's uncle's smoking. Not satisfied

with these butts of cigarettes they began to rob small coins from the money from the servant. Gandhiji and his friend however said good-bye to smoking when Gandhiji's natural instinct rebelled against this detestable conduct realised that it was stupid, dirty and dangerous thing to do.

Gandhiji was fifteen years old. His elder brother who was a meat eating one, owed some money to someone. He did not have the money to repay. He had a piece of gold bangle around his arm. His father had given it to him. A small piece was cut out of it and sold to get enough money to repay the debt. Gandhiji undertook to do this to help his brother.

But, Gandhiji felt guilty of this conduct so much that he promised himself never to do anything like this again. He decided to confess the truth to his father. But, he was too afraid to tell this directly to his father. So he put his confession in writing and gave it to his father and asked him to punish. He was shivering when he handed over the letter to his father. His father was sick at that time and was in his bed. His father sat up in bed and read it. After reading the letter, tears of pride dropped from his eyes at the honesty of his son. Gandhiji felt that pearl drops of love washed the sin out of his heart. He simply pardoned his son as he was honest. Gandhiji felt that being very honest about our sins when joined with a deep and sincere promise that the sin would not be repeated, was the perfect way to turn away from sin.





## 8. Gandhiji and the Cheating School Master

**G**andhiji was studying his first year at the high school. The school official had come to the school for inspection. He wanted to test the class in which Gandhiji was studying.

He was asking the students to spell five words. One of the words was 'Kettle'. Gandhiji was asked to give the spelling. But, he did not know how to spell it correctly. His teacher who wanted to look good as an efficient teacher in the eyes of the school official pushed Gandhiji with toe of his shoe, signalling him to look at the student beside him to see how the word should be correctly spelled. Gandhiji considered this as cheating. Gandhiji opined that a teacher who should be there to stop students from doing such a bad act, should not encourage it. So Gandhiji did not follow his teacher's lead and courageously spelt the word kettle as he knew. He remained the only student in the class to spell the word wrongly. Such was the character of Gandhiji even from his childhood.



## 9. Gandhiji and Lie even for Fun

**I**t was the year 1926. A young man was staying in the Satyagraha Gandhiji Ashram. He was very fond of children. He was taking a lemon to a patient in the Ashram. On his way he met a little girl. She wanted to snatch the big round yellow lemon that he held before her. She seemed

## **11. Gandhiji and Prayer Necklace**

**O**ne of the Christian friends of Gandhiji in South Africa was one Mr. Coates. He was a true and honest young man. Gandhiji and Mr. Coates used to go for walks together.

Mr. Coates during one of their walks saw around the neck of Gandhiji a prayer necklace. He believed that it had something to do with Hindu magic. This gave him great pain.

"This necklace is bad for you," he said.

"Let me break it."

Gandhiji protested.

"My mother has given it to me. No, you must not break it."

"But do you believe in it?" he asked Gandhiji.

"I don't think anything bad will happen if I don't wear it, if that is what you mean. But, without a good reason, I won't give up a necklace that my mother put around my neck in the belief that it would protect me from evil."

What a regard Gandhiji had for his mother.



## **12. Gandhiji and His Hosts**

**O**nce Congress leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru came to Gandhiji's ashram for consultations. With his characteristic delicacy in regard to the little graces of life which never diverted him even in the most trying circumstances, Gandhiji gave minute instructions about the arrangements to be made for the accommodation and

convenience of the guests. He used to carry with him wherever he went a few essential articles of personal daily use like a hand basin, a commode etc. so as not to inconvenience his hosts. He had them all sent to Pandit Nehru's bed to make things a bit easy for him. But Pandit Nehru, when he came to know of it would not hear of it and hauled poor Manu over live-coals for having Gandhiji to put himself to such inconvenience.

"But Babu gave orders, what could I do?" Manu protested.

"Then you have disobeyed," replied Pandit Nehru with affected sternness. As she still hesitated, he added.

"You could tell him that Jawaharlal forbade you. Such orders are not to be obeyed, even though he slaughters you."

"That is Jawaharlal; let it be," remarked Gandhiji, when the incident was reported to him next morning. And so the hand basin, the commode and the other little things came back unused and were reinstalled as before in Gandhiji's improvised little bathroom.



### 13. Gandhiji Teaches a Lesson to a Zamindar

Once Gandhiji during a tour of Bengal was the guest of a big Zamindar.

The evening prayers were held on the terrace of his palatial mansion. Huge crowds flocked. They came mostly

to have Gandhiji's darshan. When all were seated Gandhiji came out on the terrace with the Zamindar. They two sat beside the wall right at the back.

It was custom with Gandhi to have the Lights switched off before prayers started.

So Gandhiji very softly said, "Lights off, please."

The switch happened to be just about the Zamindar's head. Yet the Zamindar did not bestir himself to comply with Gandhiji's behest. He shouted as usual for one of the servants to come and off the switch.

But, in the meanwhile before the servant arrived, Gandhiji himself lightly sprang to his feet and quietly switched the lights off and sat down again. The astonished Zamindar simply bent his head down feeling ashamed. Gandhiji then gave word for the prayers to begin. Most of the people assembled noticed this incident.

The prayers came to an end.

As the crowd was dispersing someone upset a little table. A China vase on it crashed to the floor.

And lo! the Zamindar did not shout for one of his servants as earlier. He himself jumped up and started clearing up the fragments of the broken vase.

The Zamindar had taken the gentle unspoken hint of his exalted guest, Gandhiji's example and the few words he had spoken on the dignity of manual labour had gone home on the Zamindar and all those assembled.



## 14. Gandhiji and Women Workers

Once Gandhiji was talking to Subhadra and some other young Congress women workers. They had come to report the work they were doing in the refugee colonies. The workers were wearing silken clothes in up-to-date styles. Gandhiji with a note of gentle sarcasm and fatherly reproach in his voice said:

"You go out to refugee camps to render social service, but you are unable to exercise any influence over the people there. The reason is that you put on these silken clothes in up-to-date styles and advise them to wear simple handspun clothes...Ah! Those unfortunate people are sunk in poverty, and it is futile to advise them. I wish that you should take the lead in this matter by setting an example by your deed rather than words..."

On another occasion, Indira Gandhi, along with her aunt Krishna, her cousin Tara Pandit and Padmaja Naidu, the daughter of Sarojini Naidu went to meet Gandhiji. Seeing these girls of Nehru family and Padmaja Naidu, he greeted them with a broad smile, "Hello! Have these princesses come to see me?"

Everyone laughed. He was sitting wearing a Naokhali peasant's hat, and he asked the girls,

"Don't I look handsome in this hat?"

And again everyone laughed. After a brief talk Gandhiji said:

"You girls, all of you vanish now, otherwise people waiting outside will curse you." Laughing they took leave of him.



## **15. Gandhiji and the Story of Shravana**

**G**andhiji once read the story of Shravana. Shravana's love and service for his parents impressed him very much. He laid to himself that if all the parents were to have a dutiful loving sons like Shravana, how happy they could spend their old age with all the incumbent infirmities. The story in brief:

Shravana was a young son of an old sage. His parents both the father and the mother were very old and blind. The young Shravana was serving them with all affection that was ideal for all grateful children to follow. He used to take such care of them that kept them most comfortable.

Wherever he travelled, he used to carry his parents, sitting them in pans at the ends of a big bamboo stick holding the stick on his shoulders.

One day he was travelling through a forest. On the way, his parents asked his son Shravana to get water to quench their thirst. He took a small pot and went to a small tank nearby, resting his parents under the shade of a big tree.

Just at that time Dasaratha, the king of Ayodhya and the father of the Supreme god, Sri Mahavishnu who had taken incarnation as Sri Ramachandra, was hunting nearby.

The king Dasaratha heard the sound made by the water entering the pot when Shravana was filling the pot with water in the nearby tank. The king Dasaratha mistook it to be the sound made by a wild animal drinking water from the tank. He could only hear the sound and know the direction from which it was coming. He was an expert archer. He was capable of shooting an object by merely hearing a sound coming from the object, though the object was not visible. He sent a powerful arrow towards the river where Shravana was filling the pot, to kill the supposed animal there. The arrow unfortunately struck Shravana and killed him on the spot. Dasaratha ran up to the spot when he saw what had taken place. He was filled with deep remorse. Shravana before breathing last, told the king the condition of his old parents taking rest under a nearby tree. He asked the king to take water to them and also take care of them in future.

Dasaratha came and informed the old parents of what took place inadvertently and begged their pardon undertaking to take care of them for the rest of their lives. But, the old parents could not bear the shock of losing their only dutiful son who was looking after them so comfortably. Both the parents unable to bear the pain of the catastrophe fell down dead. Before dying, the old sage cursed the king Dasaratha to meet the same fate as they of dying in the absence of his son by his side.

Another story from our puranas which made a lasting deep impression on his mind and future living was the story of Harischandra. He saw this story enacted by a group of actors. He questioned himself, "Why isn't everyone honest like Harischandra? He decided from that day to follow truth at all costs as Harischandra did. Truth for him was God."



## **16. Gandhiji and Meat Eating**

**G**andhiji had a friend whose conduct and character were not good. When Gandhiji's mother and elder brother asked him to give up his friendship, he told them:

"I know that he is weak in the ways that you say. But, he has good points too. He will not be able to change him. I think he could be a very good person if I could help him to change where he is weak now. Please, do not worry about me being changed by him."

Gandhiji thought thus: to make the world better, a good person cannot become too close to the ones he or she wants to change. One's best friends must be equal in spiritual things; for true friends cannot help but change each other. Because it is easier to be bad than to be good. Close friends will be able to change in bad ways more than they will be able to change us in good ways. If a person wants to be a friend with God, that person must think of the whole world as his/her friend. Gandhiji's friend tried to persuade him to eat meat by saying that many of their teachers, important people in Rajkot and some of the boys were secretly eating



meat and drinking wine. He further told him:

"Our teachers and these other important people are not stupid. They know that meat is good for you. You should be eating meat too. Give it a try and see what happens."

Gandhiji was unable to counter these arguments. He believed that meat eating would give him strength and confidence and that if the whole country were to eat meat, we could be free of control by the English.

Gandhiji was at the same time knew that his family was part of a caste with very strong imposings against eating meat. His feelings about following the wishes of his parents were strong too. He also knew that if his parents learned he had been eating meat, it would almost kill them.

He had strong feelings about telling the truth. He did not want to put himself in a place when he would be forced to lie to his parents.

After secretly eating meat for about a year along with his friend, one day he determined not to eat meat against the wishes of his parents saying to himself:

"It is important for me to learn to eat meat, but hiding the truth from my parents is worse than not helping India."

See how strong was Gandhiji's respect for the wishes of his parents.



## 17. Gandhiji and Two Copassengers

**G**andhiji during his sojourn in South Africa, once had to travel from Durban to Johannesburg by train on business. He purchased a first class ticket.

The train arrived at about 9 p.m. A traveller came and looked Gandhiji up and down. He saw the dark skin of Gandhiji. He did not like it. But he went, and he came back with one or two officials. One of the officials came to Gandhiji and said:

"Come along. You must go to the third class car."

"But, I have a first class ticket", Gandhiji protested.

"That means nothing," said the official.

"I am telling you that you must go to the third class car."

"This is where they put me at Durban. This is where I will stay," said Gandhiji.

"No, you won't," said the official. "If you don't leave, I will call a policeman to throw you off the train." said the official.

"Do ahead and do what you like. I will not leave here of my own free will" asserted Gandhiji.

A policeman came and pulled and pushed Gandhiji out of the train. His bags were put out too. The train then left him there in that station alone. Gandhiji went and sat in the waiting room. His friends came and arranged for his further journey.

Gandhiji had to go to Pretoria one day.

Abdul Gani, a businessman and a host of Gandhiji decided that Gandhiji should travel by first class only. Gandhiji sent a servant with a letter to the station master stating that he was a lawyer and that he always travelled in first class and he would arrive at the station to pick up his first class ticket. Gandhiji went to the station in his best English clothes and talked to the station master in his best English. He placed the money on the counter and asked for a first class ticket.

The station master saw Gandhiji and smiled.

"I'm not from this part of the world. I'm from Europe. I know how you must feel. I do want to give you a first class ticket." So saying he gave a first class ticket.

But, Abdul Gani though was happily surprised said,

"I don't think the ticket will make much difference. If the official does not send you to the third class car, the other travellers will throw you out of the first class. Black people were not given first class tickets by the station masters."

When the train arrived Gandhiji went and sat in the first class compartment. The train started. An official came shortly afterwards to check the tickets. He asked Gandhiji with a movement of his finger to go to the third class compartment. Gandhiji showed his first class ticket.

"I am not interested in that", he said, "Go to the third class compartment".

There was only one other person in that compartment.

"Why are you making problems for him?" the other passenger asked. "Can't you see that he has a first class ticket? I have no problem with him travelling herewith me." He turned to Gandhiji and said:

"Make yourself comfortable where you are."

The official said to himself as he turned to walk away, "If you want to travel with a coolie, then go ahead." He then went away.

What a difference in the behaviour between the two passengers, one who got Gandhiji, thrown out of the compartment and the other who supported Gandhiji's right to travel first class.



## **18. Gandhiji and a Young Woman**

**G**andhiji while he was in Britain met a friendly old widow who became his close friend. She would ask him to come for dinner at her house in London each Sunday. At times she would invite young women to come as well. She would encourage Gandhiji to make friends with them. Among them, a young woman was often there for the meal. The old woman would often leave her alone together. Gandhiji saw her plan to make him marry that young woman. He realised that if he had told her that he was married in the first place, that never would have happened. He then saw the simple truth "It is never too late to tell the truth."

He therefore wrote a letter to the old woman telling her that he was married when he was still a young boy and had a son. He also told her in the letter that it had hurt him to think that he had been hiding that fact from her so long. He asked her forgiveness. The old woman wrote back to Gandhiji saying that they had a good laugh over his letter and that he was welcome to continue to visit her house.

Gandhiji had always the courage to tell the truth under all circumstances even belatedly.



## **19. Gandhiji and His Christian Host**

**I**n Durban in South Africa Gandhiji came in touch with a Christian family. He was visiting them every Sunday and was having meal with them.

One day Gandhiji was talking about Jesus and Buddha. He said, "Buddha's love was very great. It did not stop with people. I don't see this love for animals in the life of Jesus." This hurt the Christian woman. Gandhiji could see that he quickly stopped what he was saying.

Then they moved to the table to eat. Her five year old boy was with them. Gandhiji had long been friends with the boy. Gandhiji made fun of the piece of meat in the boy's dish and praised the apple on his dish. The boy liked what Gandhiji said. He joined him in praising the fruit.

But, the boy's mother was worried by this. Gandhiji could see this and stopped what he was saying diverting the talk to something else.

When Gandhiji visited the next Sunday, the woman said:

"Mr. Gandhi, please don't think badly of me. But, I must say that my son has not been helped by your visits. He no longer feels comfortable eating meat. Everyday he asks for fruit, telling me what you said about the fruit being better than meat. This is too much. If he stops eating meat he will become sick or at least weak. How could I like that? From now on you must not talk to him. Things you say are not good for children to hear."

Gandhiji said, "I am sad that I have hurt you. I understand your feelings as a parent. For I too have children. We can easily end this problem. What I eat will have more effect on the child than what I say. And if I keep coming, he will see my actions. The best way to protect him from me is for me to stop coming. But, we can still be friends."

Gandhiji stopped visiting them. His concern for the welfare of others is worth emulating by one and all.



## **20. Bapuji, Who Died As He Wished**

**F**ew people know that Bapuji met the kind of death he wished and regarded as "truly heroic". During a

conversation with Mr. Anand T. Hingorani, the Editor-Publisher of "Gandhi on Nehru", Bapuji told him: "My death is to come about either on the gallows or by shooting. And that, indeed, would be truly heroic death, not the one by fasting in bed."

In the year 1933 Bapuji had been sentenced to one year's imprisonment in consequence of his defiance of the government order. In the Yeravada prison he had embarked upon a fast unto death by way of protest against the government's refusal to accord him the necessary facilities for carrying on his anti-untouchability campaign from inside the jail. When his condition became so bad that further detention might prove fatal, the government ordered his release unconditionally on August 23, 1933.

One evening the following conversation took place between Mr. Anand and Bapuji when Bapuji was taking a stroll in the terrace garden of Parnakutir where he was staying.

"Anand, what do you think I should do in my present predicament? This time I did not expect to be released. I thought I would be allowed to die. In fact, I had fully prepared myself for such an eventuality. So much so that I had even given away my little personal things to the nurses and other attendants in the hospital only a day previous to my release. I do not know how my death by fasting would have been regarded by people."

"Why, it would have been a most glorious death, Bapuji," Anand answered.

"Nonsense" said Bapu, "You consider that glorious death dying by fasting! I don't. Where is the glory in it? But, do you know it is written in my horoscope that I have to die a heroic death."

"But, Bapu, even this death by fasting is a heroic one. To allow oneself deliberately to die by inches is not an easy thing. It means courage of the highest order," said Anand.

"No. I do not think so. My death is to come about either on the gallows or by shooting. And that, indeed, would be truly heroic death, not the one by fasting in bed."

How prophetic Bapuji was about his death and met with death the way he wished.



## **21. Gandhiji - Kastur Ba Quarrel**

**T**he house in which Gandhiji was staying in South Africa was in the Western model. The rooms had no outlets for dirty water. Each room had chamber-pots. Rather than have these cleaned by a servant or a sweeper, Gandhiji's wife Kastur Ba, or Gandhiji himself were attended to their cleanliness. Kastur Ba cleaned the pots of the other tenants also. But, she was averse to clean those used by one who had been a panchama that is an untouchable. She did not even like Gandhiji doing it. One day she chided Gandhiji, her eyes red with anger and tears from her eyes, as she descended the ladder, pot in hand from the room of the panchama. Gandhiji was far from being satisfied by her



merely carrying the pot unwillingly and grumbling. He wanted her to do it cheerfully. So he said raising his voice: "I will not stand this nonsense in my house."

The words pierced her like an arrow. She shouted back.

"Keep your house to yourself and let me go!" Gandhiji lost his temper. He caught her by the hand, dragged the helpless woman to the gate and was about to pushing her out. Tears were running down her cheeks in torrents. She cried:

"Have you no sense of shame? Must you so far forget yourself? Where am I to go? I have no parents or relatives here to harbour me. Being your wife, you think I must, put up, with your cuffs and kicks? For heaven's sake behave yourself and shut the gate. Let us not be found making scenes like this."

Gandhiji realised his hasty behaviour and shut the gate. He said to himself,

"If my wife could not leave me, neither could I leave her!"

Kastur Ba with her matchless powers of endurance, had always been the victor in her domestic battle with her husband Gandhiji.



## 22. Gandhiji and Gifts

**G**andhiji after completing his work in South Africa was returning to India.

Farewell meetings were arranged at every place. Costly gifts were presented to Gandhiji.

One of the gifts was a gold necklace worth fifty guineas was meant for Kastur Ba, Gandhiji's wife. He had no costly ornaments of his own in his house. Further Gandhiji was exhorting people to conquer the infatuation for jewellery. So Gandhiji was in a dilemma as to what to do with all the jewellery he got as gifts. He at last decided to create a trust of them in favour of the community and appointed Parsi Rustomji and others as trustees. He also consulted Kastur Ba and his children. The children readily agreed to his proposal. They said,

"We do not need these costly presents. We must return them to the community. If we need them, we could easily purchase them." Gandhiji was delighted. Gandhiji asked his children to plead with their mother who was averse to the proposal.

They said, "Certainly that is our business. She does not need to wear the ornaments. She would want to keep them for us. As we don't want them, why should she not agree to part with them?"

But, Kastur Ba argued, "You may not need them. Your children may not need them. If cajoled, they will dance to your tune. I can understand you are not permitting me to wear them. But, what about my daughters-in-law? They will be sure to need them. And who knows what will happen tomorrow. I would be the last person to part with these gifts so lovingly given."

She reinforced her arguments in the end by tears. But, the children were adamant. Gandhiji was also unmoved.

Gandhiji said: "The children have yet to get married. We do not want to see them married young. When they are grown up, they can take care of themselves. And surely we shall not have for our sons, brides who are fond of ornaments. And if, after all, we need to provide them with ornaments, I am there. You will ask me then."

"Ask you! I know you by this time! You deprived me of my ornaments, you would not leave me in peace with them. Fancy you offering to get ornaments for the daughters-in-law. You who are trying to make sages of my boys from today. No, the ornaments will not be returned. And pray what right have you to my necklace."

"But," Gandhiji rejoined "is the necklace given to you for your service or for my service?"

"I agree. But, service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled for you day and night. Is that no service? You forced all and sundry on me, making me weep bitter tears and I slaved for them."

But, Gandhiji ultimately succeeded in getting a consent from her. A trust deed was then prepared.

Gandhiji was of opinion that a public worker should accept no costly gifts!



## 23. Gandhiji Gives up Salt and Pulses for His Wife's Sake

**K**astur Ba, the wife of Gandhiji was ill. Gandhi entreated her to give up salt and pulses as a part of treatment. She would not agree however much Gandhiji pleaded with her, supporting himself with authorities. At last she challenged him saying that even he could not give up those articles if he was advised to do so. Gandhiji was pained and equally delighted; delighted in that he got an opportunity to shower his love on her. He told her:

"You are mistaken. If I was ailing and the doctor advised me to give up those or any other articles, I should unhesitatingly do so. Now without any medical advice, I give up salt and pulses for one year whether you do so or not."

Kastur Ba was rudely shocked and exclaimed in deep sorrow.

"Pray forgive me! Knowing you, I should not have provoked you! I promise to abstain from these things, but for heaven's sake take back your vow. This is too hard on me."

"It is very good for you to forego these articles. I have not the slightest doubt that you will be all the better without them. As for me, I cannot retract a vow seriously taken. And it is sure to benefit me, for all restraint, whatever prompts it, is wholesome for me. You will therefore leave me alone. It will be a test for me, and a moral support to you in carrying out your resolve", said Gandhiji.

So Kastur Ba gave him up.

"You are too obstinate. You will listen to none", she said and sought relief in tears.

Kastur Ba for whatever reason, regained her health.



## 24. Gandhiji and Sarojini Naidu

**S**evagram was the venue. A function at which Gandhiji was being offered donations to the Kastur Ba Memorial Fund.

A woman came with a purse of one lakh rupees she had collected. She put a tilak on the forehead of Gandhiji and then stretched her hand holding the purse towards Gandhiji. When Gandhiji was about to receive it from her hand, she withdrew it and said:

"Bapuji, suppose I run away with this purse what are you going to do?"

Everybody assembled there were taken aback on hearing her words.

But, Gandhiji was unperturbed. He replied calmly with a broad smile:

"I know you are capable of doing what you have said. I am not at all worried. For I know pretty well that you will utilise the money for noble charitable purpose only."

Everybody assembled could not resist laughing.

That woman was in the habit of playing practical jokes on even great persons. She used to call Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru "Charming Prince" and Sardar Patel "Bull of Bardoli"

That woman was no other person than Sarojini Naidu, the famous nightingale poet of our country and also a great patriot.



## **25. Gandhiji and a School Boy**

**O**nce Gandhiji visited an elementary school. Young children stood in two rows to welcome him. Gandhiji was not wearing any shirt as was his wont. He always covered his upper body with an upper cloth. A very young boy began to stare at Gandhiji. He was wondering how a greatman like Gandhiji was not having even a shirt to wear. When Gandhiji approached him he innocently told him:

"Bapuji, you are not having even a shirt to wear. Shall I give you my shirt?"

"My child, one shirt is not enough for me!" said Gandhiji with a broad smile.

"Don't worry Bapuji. I have many shirts. Shall I fetch you one more shirt", the boy asked.

"Even that is not enough for me!" said Gandhiji.

"Then how many do you require?" persisted the boy.

"Thirty three crores!" Gandhiji told patting the boy on his shoulders with still a broader smile.

That was the then population of our country.

Gandhiji had in his mind millions of our countrymen who had no clothes to cover their bodies!



## 26. Gandhiji and Lawyer's Profession

**G**andhiji's conviction was that it was not impossible to practise law without compromising truth.

Gandhiji had heard as a student that the lawyer's profession was a liar's profession. But, that did not influence him, as he had no intention of earning either position or money by lying.

There was one case while he was in South Africa which proved a severe trial to Gandhiji. The client was one of his best ones. It was a case of highly complicated accounts. The book-keeping portion of it was entrusted by the court to the arbitration of some qualified accountants. The award was entirely in favour of Gandhiji's client.

It came to the notice of Gandhiji that the arbitrators had inadvertently committed an error in calculation which was in favour of his client. The opponents were not aware of it. Yet Gandhiji wanted to admit this in the court but the Senior Counsel was opposed to it. The Senior Counsel expressed his opinion that no counsel was bound to admit anything that went against his client's interest. But, Gandhiji held the quite opposite view.

The Senior Counsel refused to argue the case. Gandhiji agreed to argue the case admitting the error as requested by his client.

Gandhiji referred to the error in the accounts but argued and convinced the Judge that the error was due entirely to inadvertence.

The Judge appreciated Gandhiji's principle to adhere to truth whether advantageous or not to either of the clients and confirmed the award in favour of Gandhiji's client after rectifying the error in the accounts.

Gandhiji was delighted that his conviction that it was not impossible to practise law without compromising truth.



## **27. Gandhiji and Rustomji**

**P**arsi Rustomji was one of the clients of Gandhiji. He was a very close friend also. He used to inform Gandhiji most of his affairs without hiding anything.

He was a large importer of goods from Mumbai and Kolkata. He frequently resorted to smuggling. But, as he was on the best terms with custom officials no one suspected him. In charging customs duty they used to take his invoices on trust. Some even connived at the smuggling. He kept this activity unknown to Gandhiji somehow.

The smuggling was discovered as the saying "theft like quicksilver won't be suppressed."



Rustomji then came running to Gandhiji tears rolling down his cheeks. He implored Gandhiji:

"Bhai, I have deceived you. My guilt has been discovered today. I have smuggled and I am doomed. I must go to jail and be ruined. You along may be able to save me from the predicament. I have kept back nothing else from you, but I thought I ought not to bother you with such tricks of trade, and so I never told you about the smuggling. But now how much I repent it!"

Gandhiji calmed him and said: "To save or not to save you is in His hands. As to me you know my way. I can but try to save you by means of confession of the crime!"

"But is not my confession before you enough?" Rustomji asked.

"You have wronged not me but Government. How will the confession made before me avail you?" Gandhiji replied gently. He further told him:

"I don't think this case should be taken to court at all. It results with the Custom Officer to prosecute you or to let you go and he in turn will have to be guided by the Attorney General. I am prepared to meet both. I propose that you should offer to pay the penalty they may fix. The odds are that they will be agreeable. But, if they are not, you must be prepared to go to jail. I am of opinion that shame lies not so much in going to the jail as in committing the offence. The deed of shame has already been done. Imprisonment you should regard as a penance. The real penance lies in resolving never to smuggle again".

Rustomji said:

"You may do just as you like."

Gandhiji met the Custom Officer and also the Attorney General. Both of them accepted Gandhiji's complete frankness. The case against Rustomji was compromised. He was to pay a penalty equal to twice the amount he had confessed to having smuggled.

Gandhiji thus again succeeded in saving his client by adhering to truth and confession of one's guilt.



## **28. Gandhiji's Dress**

**M**ahatma Gandhiji once went to Buckingham Palace to take tea with the King Emperor. As usual he was dressed in a loincloth and sandals. Churchill even called him a 'Naked Fakir'. He was later on questioned on the appropriateness of his dress when visiting the King Emperor of an empire where the sun never set. Gandhiji in his inimitable way replied:

"The king was wearing enough for both of us!"



## **29. A Noble Gesture**

**O**nce Gandhiji went to meet Louis Mountbatten the viceroy in Delhi. It was a very hot summer day. Gandhiji was sitting in the Viceroy's study which was

equipped with the best air-conditioner in Delhi. Passing with abruptness from Delhi's severe heat into chilly study Gandhiji was affected and he was trembling. Seeing his guest, the half-naked Gandhiji trembling. Seeing his guest, the half-naked Gandhiji trembling, Mountbatten rang for his A.D.C who arrived with Edwina Mountbatten the wife of the Viceroy.

"My God!" she exclaimed! "You'll give the poor man pneumonia!" She then rushed to the air-conditioner, snapped it off, threw open the window, then hurriedly went off to get one of her husband's old Royal Navy bridge sweaters to cover Gandhiji's shaking shoulders.

What an ideal host was Edwina Mountbatten! What an affectionate gesture she made to Gandhiji!

When Gandhiji was warm again, Mountbatten took him into the terrace for tea. While Mountbatten took tea, Manu, one of Gandhiji's close associates who had accompanied him, laid out the spare meal consisting of lemon soup, goat's curd and dates before Gandhiji.

Smiling Gandhiji preferred his goat's curd to Mountbatten.

"It's rather good" he said, "Do try this".

"I don't think really I ever have" he murmured hoping that those words might somehow discourage his guest's effort at generosity. Gandhiji was not to be so easily dissuaded.

"Never mind" he replied laughing.

"There's always a first time for everything. Try it now."

Trapped, Mountbatten dutifully accepted a spoonful. It was, he thought, "ghastly."



### 30. Security to Gandhiji

**L**ord Mountbatten, the Viceroy asked the poet Sarojini Naidu, Gandhiji's associate whether Congress Party could really protect Gandhiji.

"Ah" she said laughing.

"You and Gandhiji may imagine that when he walks down the Kolkata station platform looking for a suitably crowded third class compartment he is alone. Or when he is in his hut in the Untouchable Colony he is unprotected. What Gandhiji doesn't know is that there are a dozen of our people dressed as untouchables walking behind him, crowding into that compartment. When he moved into the Bangi Colony in Delhi, a score of Congress workers again scrupulously clothed as Harijans are sent to live in hovels around his. My dear Lord Louis, you will never know how much it has cost the Congress Party to keep the old man in poverty!"



### 31. Gandhiji and Waste

**T**he British government put forth a plan to partition India into two parts, the India and Pakistan. Gandhiji was invited by the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten to discuss the plan.

Gandhiji arrived punctually at the Viceroy's House at 12-30 afternoon.

Mountbatten came to greet him with a smile and hearty welcome on his lips. Gandhiji reciprocated it with a press of his index finger of his right hand to his lips like a mother hushing a child. Mountbatten stopped, stunned halfway. At the same time at the sight, a wave of relief, tinged humour, swept the Viceroy.

It was a day of silence for Gandhiji, Monday!

Gandhiji settled into an armchair and drew from under the folds of his loincloth, a heap of dirty used envelopes and a pencil. Stub barely two inches long.

Gandhiji refused to waste even a scrap of paper or a stub of pencil. He himself scissored up the envelopes in which his mail arrived turning them into neat little note pads which he proceeded to cover from top to bottom with his scrawl.

When Mountbatten had finished explaining his plan, Gandhiji licked the head of his pencil stub and began to set down on the back of an old envelope a few enigmatic reaction to what were the most important and most heart breaking words he would bear during his life time! His writing finally covered the backs of five old envelopes and when Gandhiji left, Mountbatten carefully preserved them for posterity.

Gandhiji never deviated from his principle not to waste anything even when dealing with very very important matter and also even persons like the Viceroy.



## **32. Gandhiji with H.H. Sankaracharya of Kanchi**

**M**ahatma Gandhiji met His Holiness Shri Chandrasekhara Saraswati, the Sankaracharya of Kanchi in a goshala (cow-shed) in Pallasserri village during his tour of Kerala State in the year 1929.

It was evening and they were immersed in deep conversation. It was time for Gandhiji's evening meal. Rajaji (Shri C. Rajagopalachari who was our first Governor-general after attaining independence) who had accompanied him, reminded him that it was time for his evening meal. Gandhiji was always keeping up his time-schedules for his daily activities.

Gandhiji just waved his hand and said:

"The conversation I am having now with Acharya is itself my evening meal for today!"



## **33. Gandhiji - His Oath to His Mother**

**G**andhiji after he passed matriculation examination in 1887, decided to go to England to become a barrister. When his mother came to know about this, she was sorely perplexed. She did not like the idea of parting with his son. Further she had heard that young men got lost in England, they took to women and wine. When she pleaded with Gandhiji mentioning this, Gandhiji said:

"Will you not trust me? I shall not lie to you. I swear that I shall not touch any of those things", and took three vows not to touch wine, women and meat.

She then gave Gandhiji permission to go to England.

While Gandhiji was in England, one day after dinner he sat down to play bridge along with the landlady. During this time every player indulged in innocent jokes as a matter of course. But, the hostess and others began to make indecent one as well. Gandhiji also joined in. Just when was about to go beyond the limit leaving the card and the game to the others as a victim to the invitation from a women who moved him to the lust. His companion blessed warning just then:

"Whence this devil in you, my boy! be off, quick".

Gandhiji remembered his undertaking and the oath to his mother. He felt ashamed and took the warning. He then fled from the scene to his room quaking, trembling and with beating heart like a quarry escaped from its pursuer.



## 34. Gandhiji and His Queer Looking Friend

**N**arayana Hemachandra was a writer. He became a friend of Gandhiji in England. His dress was queer, a clumsy pair of trousers, a wrinkled, dirty brown coat, after the Parsi fashion, no necktie or collar, and a tasselled woolen cap. He grew a long beard. He was lightly built and short of stature.

His face was scarred with smallpox. With his hand he was constantly turning over the beard.

Once he came to Gandhiji at his residence. He was in a shirt and dhoti. The landlady opened the door, came running to Gandhiji in a fright and said:

"A sort of madcap wants to see you."

Gandhiji went to the door and took him into his room. Gandhiji was also shocked at the appearance of his friend.

"Did not the children in the street rag you?" asked Gandhiji.

"They ran after me, but I did not mind them and they were quiet" adding.

"You civilised fellows are all cowards. Greatmen never look at a person's exterior. They think of his heart!"

Gandhiji smiled in agreement.



## **35. Gandhiji and Self-Help**

**I**n South Africa, Gandhiji found that he had to cut down expenses to make both ends meet.

The washerman's bill was heavy. Further the washerman was noted for his unpunctuality, even two to three dozen shirts and collars proved insufficient for him. Collars had to be changed daily and shirts at least every alternate day. So he bought a washing outfit and a book on washing.



Gradually, he became an adept in washing in no time.

Once Gokhale came to South Africa. He had with him a scarf which was a gift from Mahadev Govind Ranade. He treasured the memento with the utmost care and used it only on special occasions. One such was the banquet given in his honour by the Johannesburg Indians. The scarf was creased and needed ironing. As there was no time to give it to the laundry, Gandhiji offered to iron it himself. But Gokhale said:

"I can trust your capacity as a lawyer, but not as a washerman. What if you should soil it? Do you know what it means to me?"

However, Gandhiji ironed it to the satisfaction of Gokhale. Gandhiji said:

"I have won your certificate. After that I don't mind if the rest of the world refused me the certificate!"



## 36. Gandhiji and the English Hair-Cutter

**G**andhiji once went to an English hair-cutter in Pretoria. The barber contemptuously refused to cut his hair. Gandhiji felt hurt. He immediately purchased a pair of clippers and cut his hair before the mirror. He could succeed more or less on cutting the front hair, but spoiled the back. The friends in the court shook with laughter.

"What is wrong with your hair, Gandhi. Have rats eaten it?"

Gandhiji said:

"We do not allow our barbarians in our own country to serve untouchable brethren. I got the reward of this in South Africa, not once, but on many occasions. It is the punishment for our own sins!"

This conviction of his saved him from becoming angry with the English barber!



## **37. Gandhiji and an Object of Infatuation**

**I**n July 1914, Gandhiji was returning to England from South Africa. One Mr. Kallanbach was with him in the steamer. They were close friends. Mr. Kallanbach was very fond of binoculars and had with him one or two costly pairs. They were having daily discussions over one of these. Gandhiji tried to impress on his friend that such possessions were not in keeping with the ideal of simplicity that they aspired to reach.

Their discussion one day came to a heated head. They were then standing near the porthole of cabin.

"Rather than allow these to be a bone of contention between us why not throw them into the sea and be done with them!" Gandhiji said.

"Certainly...throw them away, the wretched things!" agreed Mr. Kallanbach.

"I mean it," said Gandhiji seriously.

"So do I!" quickly came the reply.

And forthwith Gandhiji flung them into the sea. Though Mr. Kallanbach's infatuation for the binoculars was very high, he never regretted it. They got rid of an object of contention between them.

It was an act of mutual regard for their views as friends.



## 38. Gandhiji and an Offering to a Priest

**O**nce Gandhiji visited Benares. He went to a sacred place called JNANA-VAPI. He was not in a good mood as the place was very dirty though a very sacred place. He had no mind to give any DAKSHINA (money offering to a priest) to the Panda there as was the custom. But yet Gandhiji offered as a token of DAKSHINA a pie, the smallest coin then to the Panda. The Panda got angry as it was very petty offering. He threw the pie and swore at Gandhiji:

"The insult will take you straight to hell!"

Gandhiji was not perturbed.

"Maharaj" said Gandhiji, "Whatever fate has in store for me, it does not behove of your class to indulge in such language. You may take this pie if you like, or you will lose that too!"

"Go away", the Panda replied, "I don't care your pie" And he continued further volley of abuse.

Gandhiji calmly took back the pie and went his way flattering himself that the Panda had lost a pie and he had saved one. But, the Panda Maharaj was hardly the man to let the pie go. He called back Gandhiji and said:

"Alright, leave the pie here. I would rather not be as you are. If I refuse your pie, it will be bad for you!"

Gandhiji gave him the pie and went away smiling.



## **39. Gandhiji and the Thief Who Stole His Watch**

**G**andhiji was having a watch, Ingersoll which hung from a string around his waist. Someone in his railway compartment coming down to Delhi stole it. What hurt Gandhiji was not the loss of his watch which had cost him only eight shilling but an article of his faith.

Almost six months later, in September 1947, when Gandhiji was staying in Birla House, New Delhi, a stranger appeared one afternoon asking to see the Mahatma. At first, he refused to give his name or tell Gandhiji's secretary why he wanted to see Gandhiji. Finally he admitted that he had stolen Gandhiji's watch. He had come to return it and ask his forgiveness. "Forgive you?" exclaimed the secretary. "He will embrace you." He took the man to Gandhiji. He squatted before the Mahatma exchanging a few words, the secretary

could not hear. Then Gandhiji embraced him and, giggling like a child who has recovered a lost toy, he called his followers to see the watch and meet the prodigal son who had returned it.



## **40. Indira Gandhi - A Male Child!**

**M**unshi Mubarak Ali, an old man was an intimate household employee of Motilal Nehru, the grandfather of Indira Gandhi. Motilal always treated him as his brother while Jawaharlal, his wife Kamala and his sisters Swaroop and Krishna all loved and respected him.

The old man was suffering from the deadly disease cancer and he was aware of his approaching death. One day he told Motilal Nehru, "Bhai Saheb, I cannot die till I have held Jawaharlal's child in my arms, and blessed it."

Soon after Kamala Nehru gave birth to a child. The little baby was taken by a nurse to the little house in the compound of Anand Bhavan where the old Munshiji and his family were residing.

Tears of joy welled out of the eyes of the old man Munshiji. He took the child of Jawaharlal in his arms and kissed the little charming face.

"Mubarak Ho, Bhai Saheb, he congratulated Motilal, may the little one enjoy Allah's choicest blessings and prove a worthy son of Jawaharlal, as Jawahar is your worthy son."

As the baby was taken back by the nurse, the old man muttered,

"Motilal's grandson, by the grace of Allah, will illuminate the name of the Nehru's. He then immediately drifted into a coma from which he would never awaken."

It was too late to correct the dying man's impression and to inform him that Jawaharlal and Kamala's first baby whom he had blessed was not a boy but a girl who had been named Indira.



## **41. Indira Gandhi and Her Dolls**

**I**ndira Gandhi was fond of dolls. There were many of them of all sizes, shapes and forms. Among the dolls there were a number of tiny tin soldiers in the uniforms of the British regiments- the cavalry and infantry and the artillery, dragging their big guns behind them.

As a little girl, she would place the bride-doll, still in her bridal finery and the bridegroom doll in the ranks of the satyagrahis. In front of them, the tri-colour flag, the symbol of India was fixed; all this opposite to the soldiers. She would then admonish the dolls,

"Don't forget you are a satyagrahi. You are not to be afraid of the police."

Then she would place a paper flag and stick it in the hand of the bride-doll and march both sets of dolls – the satyagrahis from one end, and the police and the army from

the other. As the confrontation progressed, she would get excited with the drama of impending clash and start shouting all the slogans of the non-cooperation movement that she remembered.

*Bharat Mata ki jai*

*Hindu-Muslim Zindabad*

*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai*

And as she should, she let her satyagrahi dolls move forward, defiantly waving their flags, till inevitably they clashed with the red turbans of the police and the soldiers of the British army. She would lead her satyagrahi dolls, waving thin flags to run over the soldiers which fell to the ground on the marble floor with a clamour which brought the sleepy old ayah running into the room.



## 42. Indira Gandhi's Ambition

**I**ndira Gandhi was fond of reading books. She read about Joan of Arc and was profoundly inspired by the tale of her martyrdom. Once when a teacher asked her what she would like to be, hoping she would say 'a teacher or a lady doctor or a lawyer like Portia', she replied:

"I would like to be someone like Joan of Arc."



## **43. Indira Gandhi and Her Monkey Brigade**

**I**ndira Gandhi was twelve years old. She wanted to get herself enrolled as a member of the Congress.

"You are only twelve," she was told "to be a full member you must be twenty one or at least eighteen."

She retorted in a temper.

"Thank you. I'll see you in six years."

She wanted to have her own organisation of children. All the children of the whole city were along with the idea. Thousands of boys and girls turned up to join the organisation.

Apart from learning to drill and march in formation, the children took over all the lighter tasks like writing, cyclostyling and distribution of Congress bulletins, making flags and other decorations for processions. They even undertook the dangerous work of carrying secret messages to workers who had gone underground. As they were all children, the police never suspected their activities.

One day when Indira told her mother that they were still looking for a suitable name for their organisation, Kamala replied with a smile.

"Why not call it 'Vanar Sena'- the Monkey Brigade!" Indira felt hurt thinking that their patriotic work was being belittled by comparing them with chattering monkeys. But, Kamala reminded her daughter about the legend of the Monkey Army of Hanuman that had helped Sri Rama to



invade Lanka and rescue Sita who was held captive in Ravana's park. Indira then accepted her mother's suggestion.



## 44. Indira Gandhi Adopts an Untouchable Girl

**M**ahatma Gandhiji undertook a 'fast-unto-death' as a protest against the separate electorates given by Ramsay Macdonald's Communal Award to the depressed classes. Indira was then only a student. She thought that to save Gandhiji's life, everyone must convince him that there had been a change of heart in their attitude to the so-called untouchables. She also realised that "what Bapu needs are not mere prayers but action."

So the next morning after seeing Gandhiji, Indira Gandhi 'adopted' the little daughter of the school sweeper woman. The poor little girl was dressed in filthy rags. Indira Gandhi gave her a bath and oiled and combed her hair and dressed her in clean and new clothes which she had bought for the child out of her pocket money. At night she let the daughter of the "untouchable" sleep next to her!



## 45. Indira Gandhi and Mangoes

**S**oon after marriage, the young couple, Feroze Gandhi and Indira Gandhi went on a honeymoon to Kashmir.

It was spring time. They were as happy as any newly wedded couple. Even in that time of bliss Indira Gandhi could not forget the lonely man in Anand Bhavan, Ahmedabad, Jawaharlal Nehru, her father who was sweltering in the heat. From Gulmarg in Kashmir, she sent a telegram jointly signed:

"Wish we could send you some cool Breeze from here."

Jawaharlal Nehru who was famous for his celebrated and subtle sense of humour sent the telegraphic reply.

"Thanks. But, you have no mangoes."

Indira Gandhi was very fond of mangoes and Nehru knew it. Mangoes were not available at Gulmarg.



## **46. Indira Gandhi – Protects a Muslim Family**

**I**n the wave of the partition of India in August 1947, had come violent, brutal riots in India and the newly created Pakistan. Looting, arson and violence against minority community, especially Muslims increased.

One day the situation was very explosive. The driver of the jeep of Indira Gandhi had run away. She noticed that some persons had surrounded the house of a poor Muslim family and were about to attack the family members. Indira Gandhi was also subjected to abusive remarks. Even a rude hand tore away the dopatta with which she had covered her head. She even then boldly went into the house where the Muslim family was shivering in fear for their lives.

"Come with me", she said simply.

"No one will harm you." Really no one dared! She was the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister. By then the driver had returned. She took them to her father's house where they were served food and given shelter.



## 47. Indira Gandhi – Nehruji's Last Journey

**J**awaharlal Nehru the Prime Minister of India died on 27th May 1964. His daughter Indira Gandhi was by his bed side. She broke down with sorrow. She like everybody kept on all-night vigil. But, she got up and went down. She had not eaten for twenty four hours. Yet she ordered the cooks to prepare breakfast for the whole staff of the Prime Minister's house. She told them all to eat, to shave and bathe and dress in clean clothes for the funeral.

"You know that Papu would never like you in this dishevelled state to accompany him on his last journey," she told them.



## 48. Abdul Kalam and Caste Discrimination

**A**.P.J. Abdul Kalam, was studying fifth standard at the Rameswaram Elementary School. He used to wear a cap which marked him as a

Muslim. He used to sit in the front row next to one Ramanatha Sastry, the son of the Rameswaram temple Chief Trustee, who was a brahmin and was wearing the sacred thread.

The class teacher could not stomach a Hindu Priest's son sitting with a Muslim boy. He was asked to go and sit on the back bench. Both Abdul Kalam and Ramanatha Sastry felt very sad and dejected. Abdul Kalam went and sat on the back bench.

This was brought to the notice of Lakshmana Sastry, the father of Ramanadha Sastry. He summoned the teacher and told him that he should not spread the poison of social inequality and communal intolerance in the simple minds of innocent children. He bluntly asked the teachers to either apologize or quit the school and the town. The teacher regretted his behaviour and ultimately got reformed.



## **49. The Science Teacher of Abdul Kalam**

**T**he Science teacher of A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Siva Subramania Iyer though an orthodox brahmin was something of a rebel. But, his wife was very conservative in her outlook. He did his best to break the social barriers.

One day Sivasubramania Iyer invited Abdul Kalam for a meal in his home. His wife was horrified at the idea of a Muslim boy being invited to dine in her ritually pure kitchen.

Sivasubramania Iyer was not perturbed, nor did he get angry with his wife, but instead served him with his own hands and sat down beside his Muslim boy to eat his meal. His wife watched them from behind the kitchen door and observed how Abdul Kalam ate rice, drank water and cleaned the floor after the meal. He had done as a brahmin boy would have done.

Sivasubramania Iyer invited Abdul Kalam again the next week end. When Abdul Kalam went to his home, Sivasubramania Iyer's wife herself took Abdul Kalam inside the kitchen and served him food with her own hands.

Sivasubramania Iyer told him afterwards:

"Once you decide to change the system, such problems have to be confronted."



## 50. Abdul Kalam and His Maths Teacher

**A**.P.J. Abdul Kalam, while he was studying fourth form, his mathematics teacher, Ramakrishna Iyer, was teaching another class. Inadvertently, Abdul Kalam wandered into that classroom and in the manner of an old-fashioned despot. Ramakrishna Iyer caught him by the neck and caned him in front of the whole class.

Many months later, when he scored full marks in mathematics, the teacher narrated the incident to the entire school at morning assembly:

"Whomsoever I cane becomes a great man! Take my word, this boy is going to bring glory to his school and to his teachers". His praise quite made up for the earlier humiliation!

How true was the prediction of the teacher! Abdul Kalam became the President of India.



## **51. Albert Einstein and a Girl**

**A**lbert Einstein was one of the greatest Scientists of the world. He was well known for his simple ways and unassuming nature. He loved children very much. A little girl lived in his neighbourhood. She went often to Einstein. Her mother asked her daughter why she was visiting Einstein frequently and disturbing him. The little girl said:

"I have trouble with my homework in Arithmetic. I came to know that at No.112 a person was living who is great mathematician. Everybody said he is a good person. I went to him and asked him to help me with my home work. He explains everything very well. It is easier to understand than when our teacher explained it in school. He always welcomed me!"

When she heard this, she knew that the person was no other than the great Mathematician and Physicist. The child's mother was panic-stricken. She rushed to Einstein's house and apologised for her daughter's behaviour and disturbing him. But Einstein said:

"You don't have to excuse yourself. I have really learned more from the conversation with your child that she did with me."



## 52. Chacha Nehru and His Autograph

**F**irst Prime Minister of our independent India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was very fond of children. His birthday, 14th November is celebrated as Children's Day throughout the country by the children.

One day a boy asked Chacha Nehru:

"Chachaji, can I have your autograph?" extending autograph book.

Nehruji obliged him. The boy looked at the autograph and pointed out to him:

"Chachaji you have omitted to put the TARIK (date). Nehru put the date also. The boy again said:"

"Chachaji, you have again not written any SANDESH (message)"

Nehru smiled and wrote a small message.

When the boy looked at the autograph book, he was surprised. Nehruji had written his signature in English, the date in Urdu and the message in Hindi. When the boy looked at Nehru questioningly, he with a broad smile said:

"My dear kid, you asked for my signature in 'English',

the date in 'Urdu' and the message in 'Hindi' and you have them thus!"



## 53. Blank List of Cabinet

**W**hen India attained independence, Lord Mountbatten, ex-vice-roy was chosen as the first Governor-General of our country.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister gave to Mountbatten an envelope containing the list of persons who would constitute the first Ministers of an independent India.

After Pandit Nehru left and before he went to bed, Mountbatten opened the envelope that Nehru had given him. As he did, he burst into a roar of laughter. In the haste of that great evening, Pandit Nehru had not had the time to set down the names of independent India's first Cabinet.

The envelope contained a blank sheet of paper!



## 54. Nehru Retrieves a Ball

**I**n a park in Allahabad some young boys were playing with a small rubber ball. One of the boys hit the ball into the cavity of the trunk of a big tree. The boys tried to retrieve the ball from the cavity in vain as their little hands could not reach the bottom of it. The boys began to abuse the boy who had hit the ball into the cavity. Unable to bear the abuses, the boy began to weep.



Just then a boy who was strolling in the park saw the plight of the boys. He came and tried retrieve the ball with his hand but he too could not.

He thought for a moment.

He asked them to bring a bucket full of water and a jug. They brought them. He then poured the water into the cavity. As the ball was light, it floated over the water in the cavity and came up. He could then easily pick it up and gave it to the boys. Their joy knew no bounds. They all praised the intelligence of their new friend.

The new friend was our Chacha Nehruji!



## **55. No Ticket No Admission even to Pandit Nehru**

**I**t was the year 1923.

The Indian National Congress was holding the meetings in Kakinada in Andhra Pradesh. Top National leaders came to attend the same.

To control the entry into the meeting hall, an entry fee was prescribed. A number of volunteers were manning the entry doors. Sri Konda Venkatappaiah, the Chief Organiser came and instructed the volunteers:

"Don't allow whomsoever, however great he may be. Even if the God comes, say so. He should also have an entry ticket! Understand!"

One of the V.I.P. entry doors was being manned by a young girl. She was strictly following the instructions.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who later became our Prime Minister, came along with a number of his followers. He was stopped at the door:

"Ticket, please", the girl asked.

Nehru and his followers had not purchased tickets. They all became angry at the behaviour of the girl.

"Do you know who this person is?"

"No...really I don't know. It does not matter. No ticket, no entry please" she was adamant.

Meanwhile, Nehru had sent one of the persons to fetch tickets for all of them.

"The girl was only discharging her duty. Why all of you are getting angry with her!" said Pandit Nehru entering into the hall after surrendering the tickets to the girl.

This girl was no other person than the famous patriot and social worker and wife of Sri Chinthamani Deshmuck, the famous Finance Minister in the then Nehru's Cabinet.



## **56. Pt. Nehru's Impartiality**

**P**t. Jawaharlal Nehru was the Chairman of the Allahabad Municipal Board. The tax superintendent placed before him a list of defaulters of payment of water tax with a note to disconnect water supply to the defaulters according to the rules. He told him:

"Sir, the list contains names of very respectable very important persons."

"So what?" Nehru told him, "the rules are for everyone and should be applied to all without discrimination."

The orders were executed immediately. Among the defaulters were the Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, Inspector General of Police and many prominent citizens.

To top it all, Jawaharlal's own residence was one of them. The water connection was in the name of his father, Motilal Nehru!



## 57. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan and an Englishman

Once at a dinner party which Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan former President of our country, was present, an Englishman kept on praising his race. He said:

"God is very fond of English people. That is why He has made us with love and care to bestow fair and good looking."

Dr. Radhakrishnan did not like the criticism of other races. He told this story to the gathering.

"Friends, God decided to bake a bread. The first bread was underbaked. The English people were born out of it. For the second bread, he gave more time for fear of it remaining underbaked. It got burned and Negro races were

born out of it. The third bread was neither under nor over baked. It was perfect. We, Indian were born out of it."

The Englishman hung his head in shame while the rest of the gathering burst into a loud laughter.



## 58. "I Want It Back!" Atal Behari Vajpayee

**I**n the year 1977, 30 years of Congress rule in India ended and the Janata government took power in New Delhi. Some sycophantic bureaucrats began to take away or hide any visible signs in the Secretariat of the party, and family that had for so long governed India.

Atal Behari Vajpayee became the External Affairs minister. He had reason to dislike Jawaharlal Nehru who held the portfolio earlier in the Congress government. Two years before Vajpayee became the foreign minister, he was sent by Jawaharlal's daughter Indira Gandhi, to Jail. Vajpayee had compelling ideological and personal reasons to reject Nehru and his legacy.

When Vajpayee first entered his new office, he looked around the walls and immediately identified a blank spot.

"This is where Pandit Nehru's portrait used to be," he told his Secretary.

"I remember it from my earlier visit to the room. Where has it gone? I want it back!"

One sycophant bureaucrat had removed the portrait.

Atal Behari Vajpayee asked for the portrait to be brought back and reinstated in its place in his office. He was embarrassed by the brutal casting into dustbin of one who was India's longest serving foreign minister—Nehru held that office for 17 years.

When Nehru died, Vajpayee paid his glorious tribute describing Nehru:

"Mother India was in mourning because he 'beloved Prince' has gone to sleep, humanity was sad because its servant and worshipper has left it forever and the chief actor of the World stage has departed after performing his last act!"

The gesture of Atal Behari Vajpayee shows the ability to befriend an opponent and was a warm and heartfelt and a gentlemanly humane to a great patriotic son of India.



## 59. Cripps—A Post Dated Cheque

**D**uring the second world war, the British government sent Sri Stafford Cripps to negotiate a political settlement with the Indian leaders. Cripps met Gandhiji with a plan for political settlement.

In his inimitable style Gandhiji described Cripps' offer 'as a post dated cheque on a crashing bank!'



## 60. Malviyaji and the Nizam

**O**nce Madan Mohan Malviya, the founder of Banares Hindu University went to Nizam of Hyderabad for collection of donations for the university. The Nizam declined to give him any help though he was one of the richest men in the world. He waited for suitable opportunity to humiliate Nizam for his miserliness.

At that time a rich businessman died. His family were showering money over the dead body as was the custom. Malviyaji joined the funeral procession and started collecting the coins that were being thrown by the family members.

A friend asked:

"Malviyaji, why did you do such a nasty thing." Pat came the answer.

"There was no other way of teaching a lesson to the Nizam who refused to give any donation. It would be very embarrassing to me to return empty handed from such a rich man. I can show them at least the money collected in the funeral procession."

When the news of this reached Nizam, he felt ashamed and gave a large donation for the Banares University.



## 61. Indira Gandhi and a Foreign Doll

**I**ndira Gandhi, our former prime minister, while she was a young girl, had a beautiful foreign doll as her only playmate and it was always with her. Those were the times when the whole country was boycotting foreign goods at the call of Mahatma Gandhi. All foreign clothes were being burned at every place. Indira Gandhi had also stopped wearing foreign clothes following her elders.

One day a relation asked her, "When you yourself do not wear foreign frocks, why do you keep this foreign doll?"

Though this thing was very casually mentioned and only in jest, it had great impact on the young Indira Gandhi. It went to her heart. She took the foreign doll which was her only companion on the roof and set it on fire. Her dedication to the country prevailed over her love for her pet doll and only companion.



## 62. Rabindranath Tagore's Humour

**O**nce Rabindranath Tagore attended a meeting of the teachers. After the meeting was over, he suddenly called one of the teachers – Nepal Babu – and told him:

"Nepal Babu, you have become forgetful these days. So, I shall give 'dand'."

Nepal Babu as also the gathering were perplexed not knowing what had done wrong. Then Tagore took a stick and instead of beating him, handed over the stick to him saying:

"You had forgotten this dand (meaning stick in Hindi) at my place yesterday. So please take your stick." It was then that the assembled people understood his joke 'dand' means punishment as well as stick.



## 63. Edwina Mountbatten, Viceroy, Her Disciplined Conscience

**E**dwina Mountbatten, the Vicereine asked a servant for a few scraps for the three dogs, Sealyhams, Mizzen and Jib they had brought out from London. To her amazement, thirty minutes later, a pair of turbaned servants solemnly marched into her bedroom, each bearing a silver tray on which was set a China plate on which, in turn, was laid several slices of freshly roasted chicken breast.

Eyes wide with wonder, Edwina contemplated that chicken. She had not seen food like it in the austerity of the England, she had just left. She glanced at the Sealyhams barking at her feet, then back at the chicken. Her disciplined conscience would not allow her to give pets such nourishment.

"Give me that", she commanded.



Firmly grasping the two plates of chicken, she marched into the bedroom and locked the door. There, the woman who, as Vicereine, would offer in the next months the imperial hospitality of Viceroy's House to 41,000 people, gleefully began to devour the chicken intended for her pets.



## 64. Sir C.V. Raman's effect on Raman

**S**ir. C.V. Raman who was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics in 1930, went to Stockholm to receive the prize. He demonstrated 'Raman's Effect' before the assembled scientists. He chose alcohol as his medium.

A function was organised in the evening to facilitate Raman. Many toasts were proposed in honour of the distinguished scientist.

Raman took only tea and had not taken liquor in his life. One of the scientists present in the function jovially said:

"Sir, in the morning you entertained us by demonstrating 'Raman's Effect' on alcohol. Why don't you provide us further entertainment by demonstrating the effect of alcohol on Raman."



## **65. Napoleon Bonaparte—Dignity of Labour**

**O**nce Napoleon Bonaparte while going somewhere halted at a place where many workers were trying to lift heavy pillars. They were tired very much and were perspiring profusely.

Napoleon approached a man standing near them and was giving them directions of all sorts. He then said to other man,

"Why don't you go and help these people?"

"Do you know who I am? I am the contractor of this work", the man said with a proud air.

Napoleon without saying anything went towards the labourers and started helping them in their work. He then left the place. The contractor asked him in a haughty tone,

"Who are you?"

"I am known by the name of Napoleon!"

As soon as he heard the name, the contractor felt the earth slipping from under his feet. He apologised for his rude behaviour. Napoleon told him:

"No work should be considered lowly and one should not be extra-conscious of his position!"



## 66. Horse Drawn Gold Carriage, India's Luck

**T**he British split into two parts, India and Pakistan when they conceded freedom to our country.

The assets of the United India had to be shared by each of these new countries. A partition council chaired by the Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten was constituted to do this job.

The most remarkable article to be assigned between the two countries was a twelve horse-drawn carriage. With their ornate, hand-wrought gold and silver designs, their glittering harnesses, their scarlet cushions, they embodied all the pretensions pomp, all the majestic disdain that had both fascinated and infuriated the Indian subjects. Every Viceroy, every visiting sovereign, every royal dignitary passing through India had promenaded through the capital, Delhi is one of them. They were the formal Viceregal coaches, six of them trimmed in gold, six semi-state coaches in silver. To break up, the sets had seemed a tragedy.

It was decided that one country would get the gold carriages, the other would have to settle for the silver. But which country should get the gold ones and which the silver ones?

Lieutenant Commander, Peter Howes A.D.C. to Mountbatten, the Viceroy, proposed to determine who would get which set with the flip of a coin. Major Yacoub

Khan, the newly appointed Commander of the Pakistan bodyguard and Major Gobind Singh, the Commander of the Viceroy's bodyguard were chosen to 'call' when the coin was tossed.

The silver piece went glittering up in the air.

Unbearable suspense for a second or two!

"Head!" shouted Gobind Singh.

The coin clattered onto the stable yard. Dame Luck embraced India!

Gobind Singh had called correctly.

The Gold Carriages became India's proud possession.



## **67. V.P. Menon and His Eternal Debt**

**V**.P. Menon who was the Defence Minister in Nehru's Cabinet, after working as a construction labourer, coal miner, a factory hand and at last as a school teacher decided to try for a job in the Indian Administration in Simla, having learnt to type, in the year 1929.

When he arrived in Delhi enroute to Simla, he discovered that all the money he had, had been stolen. However, a distinguished Sikh after seeing his plight and request for a loan of fifteen rupees to cover his fare to Simla, gave him the money. When Menon asked for his address so that he could pay it back, the Sikh said:

"No, until the day you die, you may always give that sum to any honest man who asks for your help!"

Six weeks before his death, a beggar came to the family home of Menon in Bangalore. Menon took fifteen rupees from his wallet and gave it to the beggar. He thus was repaying his debt before his death!



## **68. Mark Twain and His Neighbour**

**M**ark Twain, a great American author, once asked his neighbour to lend him a set of books. The neighbour replied that he observed a principle never to lend a book to be taken outside his library, and that he was welcome to read them in his library.

After some time, the same neighbour went to Mark Twain and asked him for the loan of his lawn mover.

Mark Twain said: "I shall be glad to lend you my lawn mover but since I made it a principle never to lend it outside just like you, you will have to use it in my lawn only."



## **69. Nanthaniel Hawthorne and his wise wife**

**N**anthaniel Hawthorne, the greatest literary artist in American history and a foremost novelist was working

in the customs house. He lost his job. A broken-hearted man, he went and told his wife. Instead of sharing his sadness, she beamed with joy and said, "Now you can write your book." But Hawthorne retorted: "Yes, and what shall we live on while I am writing?"

The wise woman, she was, his wife opened a drawer and took out a bag full of cash.

"Where on earth did you get that?" asked the bewildered Hawthorne.

"I have always known that you were a man of genius. I also know that some day you would write an immortal master-piece. So every week, out of the money you have given me for housekeeping, I have saved something and it is now enough to last us for one whole year."

Hawthorne sat down and wrote one of the greatest novels ever written in the western hemisphere, "The Scarlet Letter", thanks to the push and help given by his wife.



## **70. Abraham Lincoln on Responsibility**

**T**he battle for independence of America had just been fought. As commander-in-chief of the Army, Abraham Lincoln, ordered General Meade to drive and attack hard against their opponents' rear in retreat, swiftly and daringly. Along with these instructions, he enclosed a friendly note

in his own handwriting which speaks volumes about his great character.

"The order I enclose is not of record. If you succeed, you need not publish this order. If you fail, publish it. Then, if you succeed, you will have all the credit of the movement. If not I'll take all the responsibility!"

This incident shows how brave, self effacing nobleman in thought and deed was Abraham Lincoln.



## 71. Rudyard Kipling's "Thanks"

**R**udyard Kipling, the famous writer and author of 'Jungle Book' was getting a shilling a word for his writings in those days. Some Oxford students sent him a shilling with the request: "Please send us one of your words!"

And right back came the cherished answer, "Thanks"



## 72. Long Fellow—Pun on Names

**L**ong Fellow, the famous poet was once introduced to a person name Longworth. The latter when commented on the similarity of names, the poet said: "Here is a case I fear where Pope's line will apply. 'Worth' makes the man, want of it the 'Fellow'!"



## **73. Bertrand Russell's Pranks**

**E**ven greatmen have as much fun in their childhood as any others.

Bertrand Russel was a great thinker, philosopher, mathematician, champion of intellectual, social freedom, campaigner for peace and civil and human rights.

The family doctor of Russell used to travel in a coach. The coachman used to wait at the front door while the doctor was inside the house. The coachman had an exquisite top-hat.

Russell used to get on the roof above the top-hat and drop rotten rosebuds out of the gutter on to its flat top-hat. They spread all over quickly enough for the coachman to suppose that they had fallen from heaven!

Sometimes he used to throw snowballs at the coachman while he was driving, thereby endangering the valuable lives of him and the doctor.

On a Sunday, when the park was crowded, he would climb to the very top of a large beech tree on the edge of their grounds. There he would hang upside down and scream and watch the crowd below discussing how to rescue him! When they came to a solution, Russell would get the right way and quietly come down!

Russell's uncle had three cows and a donkey. In the opinion of Russell, the donkey was more intelligent than the cows.



The donkey learnt to open the gates between the fields with his nose. Russell used to ride him without a saddle or bridle.

The donkey would kick and buck and would get him off when he tied a can full of rattling stones to his tail! He used to ride the donkey even when he went to visit the daughter of Lord Wolseley.



## 74. Russell's Pretension

**R**ussell was fond of crumbling his bread into his gravy. He was allowed to do it only in the nursery, but not in the dining room. He often used to have a sleep before his dinner. If he slept late he had dinner in the nursery but if he woke up in time he had it in the dining room.

He therefore used to pretend to sleep late in order to have dinner in the nursery. At last they discovered that he was pretending. So one day they poked him about. He made himself quite stiff imagining that was how people would be if they were asleep. But to his dismay he heard them saying! "He is not asleep, because he is making himself stiff." But, no one ever knew why he had pretended to be asleep.

Once Russell went down to the sea with his grandmother and his aunt Agatha. He had on a new pair of boots. His nurse said to him as he went out, "Take care not to get your boots wet." But the incoming tide caught him on a rock and his grandmother and aunt Agatha told him to

wade through the water to the shore. He would not do so and his aunt had to wade through and carry him.

They supposed that he did not wade through due to fear. He never told them of his nurse's prohibition. They gave him a lecture on cowardice and he meekly accepted it!



## **75. Abraham Lincoln and a Drunkard**

**A**braham Lincoln was elected as the President of America in the year 1961. He was a great man. He was famous for his love and compassion towards all living beings, men or animals. He always helped one and all in distress.

One day he was taking a stroll with his friends. On the way he noticed a horse roaming alone without its rider. He asked his friends:

"Do you know whose horse is this? Why is it roaming alone?"

"Yes, we know the owner who is a drunkard" they replied. "He might have fallen from the horse somewhere near here fully drunk."

"Let us then go and look out for him. He might have been hurt," urged Abraham Lincoln.

"Why should we bother and pity a drunkard? He deserves whatever happens to him! It is already getting dark. Let us return to our homes," they said.

But, Lincoln did not agree. He could not walk away from anyone in distress.

"You may all return home. Let me go and look out for him. He may be a drunkard. Yet he is a fellow being in distress. Let me help him!" he told them.

So saying he went in search of the drunkard. He found him lying on the ground hurt. He took him to his residence, gave him a good warm bath, food and bedding for the night and sent him back to his home the next morning.

Such was the love and compassion of Abraham Lincoln, the great President of America towards anyone in distress.



## 76. George Washington–Help to the Needy

**G**eorge Washington was revered as the Father of the Nation in the United States. He was the Commander-in-Chief during the American War of Independence.

Once while he was on his tour inspecting the army, he came to a site where a building was under construction. Some six soldiers were lifting a huge iron beam. They were struggling hard as it was too heavy for them to lift. The Captain of these soldiers who was supervising was shouting at them to lift it. But, he never went to help them.

George Washington was surprised and vexed at the behaviour of the Captain. He went to him and asked:

"They are struggling to lift it. Why don't you give them a helping hand."

The Captain was not aware that it was his Commander-in-Chief talking to him. He replied:

"Don't you know that I am their Captain? It is their business to do the job. Not mine."

George Washington got down from his horse, went and helped the soldiers and got the beam lifted.

He then told the Captain to his consternation:

"Whenever you require my help, send for me. I, as your Chief Commander-in-Chief consider it my duty to help my men when needed!"

So saying he got on to his horse and galloped away!

The Captain stood aghast and felt ashamed of his pride and arrogance.

How broad-minded are really greatmen!



## **77. General Bill and an Indian Major**

**G**eneral Bill Slim was commanding the 14th Army in Burma during World War II. He always insisted on visiting the areas nearest to the army. Once General Slim accompanied by an Indian Major decided to inspect allied advance posts that were holding back the Japanese advance.

They left at dusk to inspect three such posts. At each post the Indian Major whispered to General Slim giving him the relevant information of the army.

General Slim enquired of the Indian Major in a whisper.

"How far are we from the Japanese lines?"

"About one thousand yards", whispered the Indian Major.

"Then why on earth are we whispering?"

"Sir, I do not know why you are whispering, but I have laryngitis!"



## 78. Rajaji and Hot Summer

**R**ajaji was once travelling with an Englishman by train. It was a very hot summer day. The Englishman was sweating profusely.

He turned to Englishman and said: "Very hot, isn't?"

"Not hot enough!" exclaimed the Englishman.

"Yes, not enough to keep you gentlemen out of our country", said Rajaji smiling.



## **79. Swami Vivekananda on Indian Superstition**

**A**t a meeting in U.S., a woman fed on the vicious propaganda about Indian superstitions and inhuman practices, asked Swami Vivekananda.

"Is it a fact that the first born baby is thrown in the river Ganges to propitiate the holy river?"

Pat came the reply from the Swamiji!

"I was myself the victim of the evil practice, but I managed to swim back to the shore escaping from the jaws of a crocodile."



## **80. C. Subramanyam and His Innocent Client**

**O**nce C. Subramanyam, former Governor of Maharashtra who was also a famous criminal lawyer was defending an accused in a murder case. The judge delivered the judgement acquitting the accused. The accused who was in the dock did not move out from there. The judge asked Subramanyam what his client wanted and why he was not leaving the dock.

Sri Subramanyam told the Judge: "Your honour, I have convinced you that my client is innocent but I have yet to convince my client of his innocence."

The whole court laughed. Fortunately the judgement had already been delivered.



## 81. George Bernard Shaw—Value of a Cheque

Once a poor man came to George Bernard Shaw, the famous English playwright and asked for help. Mr. Shaw gave him five different cheques for twenty pounds each. The poor man asked:

"Sir, you could have given me one cheque for hundred pounds instead of five cheques for twenty pounds each?"

"You know people scramble for my signature and I charge thirty pounds for each signature. If you sell these cheques to others you will get fifty pounds more! I will also gain!"

"How, Sir?" wondered the poor man. "You see nobody encashes my cheques below thirty pounds as the value of my signature is thirty pounds each!"



## 82. Lal Bahadur Shastri Versus Ayub Khan

The late Lal Bahadur Shastri was a short man. When he was going to Tashkent as India's Prime Minister to have discussions with Pakistan's Ayub Khan, pressmen jokingly said:

"Sir, Mr. Ayub Khan is a tall man. You will look very short next to him."

"May be," replied Lal Bahadur Sastry. "But it is an advantage. I will have to keep my head high when talking to others, they have to keep their heads down when talking to me."



### **83. Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on British Empire**

**N**etaji Subhash Chandra Bose was lecturing in England canvassing Independence for India. Once while addressing a famous institution, Mr. Bose said:

"The British who uphold democracy and freedom so strongly are clinging on to the colonial rule in India. It is a paradox, someday they have to surrender the country to us."

A person in the audience stood up and said:

"Nobody can shake our empire so easily. One should not forget that the sun never sets in our empire! Are you not aware of it?"

Immediately Mr. Bose smiled and retorted.

"I know that, but do you know why the sun does not set in your empire? Because you, the British, cannot be trusted in the darkness!"





## 84. Mark Twain and Oxford Dictionary

**T**he famous humorous American writer, Mark Twain once attended a Church service. The Bishop delivered an extempore sermon and was vain enough to think that he said a few original things about the religion. After the sermon was over, he asked Mark Twain.

"Sir, how did you find my sermon?" Mark Twain in his usual way said:

"Sir, your sermon was good, of course. But, every word you spoke is already in this book with me!"

The Bishop wondered how every word he spoke extempore had already found a place in that book. So he said:

"Sir, May I see that book?"

Mark Twain took the Oxford Dictionary from his bag and handed it over to the Bishop.



## 85. Chandelier Fixing

**A** Maharaja of Gwalior desired and decided to decorate his palace with a chandelier which surpassed in dimension the largest chandelier in Buckingham Palace, the residence of the British monarch. He got one from Venice. The engineers expressed doubt that the roof of his palace might not support the heavy weight of the chandelier and that the roof might collapse.

The Maharaja resolved their doubt by having his heaviest elephant hoisted to the palace roof with a specially constructed crane. The roof did not collapse and withstood the heavy weight. The chandelier was fixed, thus getting his desire fulfilled.



## 86. Rajaji at Mental Hospital

**C** Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji (or C.R), while he was the Chief Minister of the Madras state, one day visited the mental hospital at Kilpauk. As was his wont he was wearing a very simple dress like any ordinary person. After inspecting the hospital while returning he met a patient who recovered from his illness and was discharged from the hospital. Rajaji just asked him:

"Do you recognise me? Who am I?"

The patient could not. So Rajaji himself told him:

"I am the Chief Minister of this State."

The patient looked at Rajaji pityingly mistaking him to be patient who had come to seek admission into the hospital and consoled him saying:

"Look here man. When I was admitted here, I was also talking and telling all persons whom I met that I am the Chief Minister of this State or the Prime Minister of this country. Now I am OK you see. You will also be OK soon!" People around Rajaji and Rajaji himself had good laugh.



## 87. Swami Vivekananda and Prince Mangal Singh

**S**wami Vivekananda once had an interesting discussion with Prince Mangal Singh at Alwar.

The Maharaja asked Swami Vivekananda:

"Well, I have no faith in idol worship. I cannot worship wood, earth, stone, or metal, like other people. Does this mean that I shall face worse in the life hereafter?"

The eyes of the Swami alighted on a picture of the Maharaja which was hanging on the wall. At his express desire it was passed on to him. Holding it in his hand, the Swamiji asked:

"Whose picture is this?"

The Dewan answered: "It is the likeness of our Maharaja."

A moment later those present trembled with fear when they heard the Swamiji commanding the Dewan to spit on it. The Dewan was thunderstruck, and the eyes of all glanced in terror and awe from the Prince to the monk, from the monk to Prince. But all the while the Swamiji insisted,

"Spit on it! I say spit on it!"

And the Dewan in fear and bewilderment cried out,

"What! Swamiji! What are you asking me to do? This is the likeness of our Maharaja. How can I do such a thing?"

"Be it so," said the Swamji, "but the Mahajaja is not bodily present in this photograph. This is only a piece of

paper. It does not contain his bones, flesh and blood. It does not speak or behave or move in any way as does the Maharaja. And yet all of you refuse to spit on it, because you see in this photo the shadow of the Maharaja's form. Indeed in spitting upon the photo, you feel that you insult your master, the Prince himself".

Turning to Maharaja, he continued:

"See, Your Highness, though this is not you in one sense, in another sense it is you. That was why your devoted servants were so perplexed when I asked them to spit upon it. It has a shadow of you. It brings you into their minds. Once glance at it makes them see you in it! Therefore they look upon it with as much respect as they do upon your own person. Thus, it is with the devotees who worship stone and metal images of gods and goddesses. It is because an image brings to their minds their chosen deity or some special form and attribute of the Divinity, and helps them to concentrate, that the devotees worship God in an image. They do not worship the stone or the metal as such."

The Maharaja was convinced of the explanation given by the Swamiji the intention behind idol worship and its purpose.



## **88. Shakespeare on Aurobindo!**

**K**.D. Sethna is a famous writer. He is the author of the famous books like:

"Essays on H.G. Wells, G.K. Chesterton, Bernard Shaw and Thomas Hardy. His poems were admired by Shri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo Ashram published his books "My Talks on Poetry", "Mallarme" and "Sri Aurobindo on Shakespeare".

Once K.D. Sethna went to a bookshop in Mumbai which was selling his books. He asked the shopkeeper:

"How my books are selling?"

"One book of yours is selling very well and fast" he replied.

"What book" Sethna enquired.

"SHAKESPEARE on Sri AUROBINDO" came the reply. What a howler it was!



## 89. Swami Vivekananda and a Dancing-Girl

Once Swami Vivekananda visited the Maharaja of Khetri his disciple. On the occasion the Maharaja was being entertained one evening with music by a dancing-girl. The Swami was in his own tent when the music commenced. The Maharaja sent a message to the Swami asking him to come and join the party. The Swami however sent word in return that as a Sanyasin he could not comply with such a request. The singer was deeply grieved when she heard this, and sang in reply, as it were a song of the great Vaishnava Saint, Surdas. Through the still evening air, to

accompaniment of music, the girl's melodious voice ascended to the ears of the Swami:

*"O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!  
Thy name, O lord, is Same-sightedness.  
One piece of iron is in the image in the temple,  
And another is the knife in the hand of the butcher.  
But when they touch the philosophers' stone  
Both alike turn to gold.  
So, O Lord, look not upon my evil qualities!  
One drop of water is in the sacred Jumna,  
And another is foul in the ditch by the road-side.  
But when they fall into the Ganga  
Both alike become holy.  
So, Lord, do not look upon my evil qualities!  
Thy name, O Lord, is Same-sightedness."*

The Swami was completely overwhelmed. The woman and her meaningful song at once reminded him that the same Divinity dwells in the high and the low, the rich and the poor—in the entire creation. The Swami could not longer resist the request, and took his seat in the hall of audience to meet the wishes of the Maharaja and to the great joy of the dancing-girl.



## 90. Swami Vivekananda— Dauntless in Spirit and Impatient of Superstition

**N**arendra Nath (Swami Vivekananda's name while he was a child) was in the habit of climbing a tree in the compound of one of his friends, not only to gather flowers, but to get rid of his superfluous energy by swinging to and fro, head downward, and then somersaulting to the ground. These antics annoyed the old, half-blind grandfather of the house, and he thought to stop them by telling Narendra Nath that the tree was haunted by an evil spirit that broke the necks of those who climbed the tree. Narendra Nath listened politely, but when the old man was out of sight, he again began to climb the tree. His friend who had taken the words of the old man seriously remonstrated. But, Narendra Nath laughed at his seriousness and said:

"What an ass you are! Why, my neck would have been off long before this if the old grandfather's ghost story was true!"



## 91. Swami Vivekananda and Will of the Most High

**O**n his way to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, on his arrival at the Chicago station he found to his dismay that he had lost the address of the committee. He was lost and did not know where to go. Nobody would deign to inform

a coloured man. At length, tired and helpless, he passed the chilly night in a big empty box found in a corner of the station. In the morning he wandered from door to door for food only to meet with insults and rebuffs from the fashionable residents of the metropolis. On and on he went. At length exhausted he sat down quietly upon the roadside, determined to abide by the Will of the Most High (God). At this juncture, the door of a fashionable residence opposite to him opened and regal looking woman descended and accosted him in a soft voice in accents of culture and refinement.

"Sir, are you a delegate to the Parliament of Religions?" The Swami told her his difficulties. The kind-hearted lady invited him into her house and promised him that after breakfast she herself would accompany him to the offices of the Parliament of Religions. The Swami was grateful beyond words to his deliverer, Mrs. George W. Hale. From then on the generous lady and her husband and children became his warmest friends.



## **92. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Broken Idol**

**R**ani Rasamayee was a rich widow. Spending all her wealth, she constructed a big temple for the Goddess Kalika Matha. She also donated sufficient money to run the temple. Further within the temple she also constructed a small temple for her family deity God Radhakrishna which she called Radhakantha temple. In this temple she installed

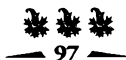


a most exquisite beautiful idol of Sri Ramakrishna which she inherited and was in their family since several decades. She was very fond of this idol.

One day the temple priest accidentally dropped the idol of Sri Krishna on to the ground resulting in the leg broken. The temple priests after long deliberation told Rani Rasamayee that a broken idol is not fit for any worship, should be thrown into the river Ganga and a new idol installed in the temple. But, she was not willing to do it. She consulted her Guru. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa about the suggestion of the priests.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa was bewildered on hearing the opinion of the priests. At that time the son-in-law of Rani Rasamayee had broken one of his legs in an accident and was under medical treatment. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa asked the priests:

"Now the leg of the son-in-law of Rani Rasamayee is broken. Is it not? So do you suggest that she should throw him into the river Ganga and a new son-in-law brought in by her? No.No. ...No. She will be asked to give treatment and get the leg set right. Similarly the broken leg of the idol Sri Krishna should also be set right again. I will do it." So saying he took the idol and set right the broken leg of idol in such a way that it looked that the leg had never been broken and set right. The priest could never question the wisdom of the Guru Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. The same idol was again installed in the temple to the untold joy of Rani Rasamayee.



## **93. Maharaja of Mysore and Roses**

**O**ne day His Highness Sri Krishnarajendra Wadiyar, the Maharaja of the erst Mysore State visited the famous garden Brindavan, near Mysore. When he came near a rose plant full of beautiful red roses, he stood before it a few minutes admiring and enjoying the fragrance enchanting beauty.

While the Maharaja was about to leave the garden, the Superintendent of the garden brought a bunch of roses full of basket from that very plant and presented it to the Maharaja expecting appreciation of his action.

"From where did you get these roses?" the Maharaja enquired.

"Your Highness, it is from the very plant you stood admiring" replied the superintendent smiling.

The Maharaja was openly looked upset and unhappy.

"What a fool you are! You have deprived thousands of visitors to this garden the opportunity to enjoy the enchanting beauty of the flowers and their intoxicating fragrance. Just to please one person you have deprived so many people of a pleasure everlasting. Never repeat this sin!" the Maharaja admonished the Superintendent.



## 94. A Farewell Party

**W**hen India achieved Independence and the country partitioned into India and Pakistan, a farewell party to the army personnel who were to cross over to Pakistan army was arranged. It was the most touching farewell of all that took place on the lawns and in the grand ball room of the Imperial Delhi Gymkhana Club.

On that occasion Brigadier Cariappa who later became the Chief Commander-in-Chief of India's army, spoke:

"We have been brothers. We will always remain brothers!"

After that, one Brigadier stepped to the rear of the bandstand. He then picked up a heavy silver trophy with a cloth. He offered it to the senior Muslim Officer Brigadier Aga Raza as a parting gift from the Hindu Officers to their Muslim comrades-in-arms. The trophy represented two sepoy, one Hindu and one Muslim standing side by side, rifles at their shoulders trained upon some common foe.

But, unfortunately the riffles, represented by a pair of silver sepoy on the trophy Brigadier Raza had carried away from Gymkhana Club, would no longer be trained upon a common foe but upon each other!

When will the time come when the stance taken by the two soldiers on the trophy becomes a reality? Every citizen of both the sub-continent, India and Pakistan, and nay the entire peace loving people of the world is looking forward to that most joyful day!



## 95. "Engaged in War, Not Games"- Indira Gandhi

**O**ne day, a quarter of century later after India and Pakistan had faced each other on the battlefield for the third time, a group of Pakistan Armored Corps Officers sought out a comparable Indian Unit to whom to surrender at the end of the Bangladesh war. They finally located as Indian Cavalry Officer at the bar of a newly conquered Club. Before accepting their surrender, the Indians insisted first on standing them a round of drinks.

Then when they brought in their unit to lay down their arms, the Indians and Pakistanis who had just finished killing one another in the rice paddies of Bengal organised a round of hockey and football matches. The fraternal spirit inspired by common service in the Indian army endured through all the troubled years to come.

Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, when she came to know about this, sent a taut message to the Indian Commander. She reminded him that he was engaged "in a war, not games."



## 96. Unique Vision on Awakening

**B**y tradition the eyes of the Maharaja of Benares had to open each day on a sole and unique vision, the Hindu symbol of Cosmic eternity, of a Sacred Cow. Each dawn a cow was led to the window of the Maharaja's bed chamber

and jabbed in the rib, so her mooing would stir the pious Maharaja from his slumber.

Once during the visit to his colleague, the Nawab of Rampur, fulfilling that morning ritual posed a big problem because the Maharaja's quarters were located on the second floor of his host's palace. The Nawab resorted to an ingenious tactic to maintain the integrity of his guests dawn ritual. He brought a crane which each morning hoisted a cow in a sling up to the Maharaja's bedroom window. Terrorized by her unnatural voyage, the poor animal emitted a series of moos so piercing they awoke up not only the pious Maharaja but most of the rest of palace as well!



## 97. Passion for Electric Train

**T**he Maharaja of Gwalior had a great passion for toy electric trains. He got an electric train laid out over 250 feet of solid silver rails set on a mammoth iron table at the center of the palace banquet hall. Special tunnels cut in the palace walls prolonged the tracks into the royal kitchen. The Maharaja's guests were placed around the table, and the ruler sat at their head presiding over the mammoth control panel that bristled with levers, accelerators, switches and alarm signals. They commanded the trains that delivered dinner to the prince's guests. By manipulating his control panel, the prince could pass the vegetables, send the potatoes shuttling through the banquet hall, or order a Red Ball express to the kitchens for a second helping for a hungry

guest. He could also with the flick of a switch deprive a guest of his desert in which case the desert trains went speeding past his waiting guest's plate!

One evening, in the midst of a formal banquet in honour of the Viceroy, the prince's control panel short-circuited. While their excellencies looked on aghast, his electric trains ran amok, racing from one end of the banquet hall to the other, indifferently sloshing gravy, roast beef and a puree of peas on the Maharaja's guests. It was a catastrophe to the great embarrassment of the Maharaja.



## **98. Wedding of a Bitch**

**T**he Nawab of Junagadh was very fond of dogs. He celebrated the wedding of his favourite bitch Roshana, to a Labrador named Bobby, with a grandiose ceremony and he invited every prince, celebrity and dignitary in India including the Viceroy to attend. To his chagrin the Viceroy declined. Still 150,000 people crowded the route of the nuptial cortege, which was led by the prince's bodyguard and the royal elephants in full regalia. After the parade, the Maharaja offered a lavish banquet in the canine couple's honour before they were led off to their beautifully decorated bridal suite to consummate their union. Those proceedings cost the Maharaja 60,000 pounds, a sum which could have financed the basic human needs of 12,000 impoverished subjects for an entire year.



## 99. The Nizam of Hyderabad and Gold Pieces

**N**awab Mir Osman of Hyderabad was reputed to be the richest man in the world and the legends of his wealth were surpassed only by legends of the avarice with which he sought to keep it in tact. In most states, it was the custom once a year for the nobles to make their prince a symbolic offering of a gold piece, which the ruler touched and then returned to its owner. In Hyderabad there was nothing symbolic about the offering. The Nizam grabbed each gold piece and dropped it into a paper bag beside his throne. On one occasion when one fell, he was on his hands and knees like a shot racing its owner along the floor to the rolling coin.



## 100. The Nizam of Hyderabad—Stingy Act

**O**nce a week, after Sunday services, the English Resident came to call. Faithfully a retainer appeared with a tray containing a cup of tea, a biscuit and cigarette for the Nizam and his guest, instead of sumptuous breakfast with champagne. One Sunday the Resident arrived unannounced with a particular distinguished visitor. Yet the Nizam whispered to his servant, who returned to offer the visitor a second tray on which had been set one cup of tea, one biscuit and one cigarette.



## **101. Rajaji Defends an Untouchable**

**I**n the year 1925 the Congress Organization fighting for the freedom of India had decided to boycott the courts which were considered as symbols of arrogant power of a foreign ruler.

Rajaji who was a lawyer then and a staunch Congress man was boycotting the courts.

At that time a Panchama (an untouchable) was convicted by the Sub-Magistrate of Tirupathi in Andhra Pradesh, because he in a fit of devotion and exultation of mind went inside along with other pilgrims into the famous temple of Padmavathi, the Consort of the Lord Sri Venkateswara of Tirumala Shrine, residing at Tiruchanur. Then, the untouchables were prohibited from entering into temples. Rajaji read a report of the judgement in the newspapers with indignation. The untouchable had filed an appeal against his conviction. The local lawyer of the untouchable approached Rajaji, who was famous, to argue in the appeal on behalf of the untouchable. Rajaji was in a dilemma whether to break the ban on Congressmen attending courts and argue the case or be loyal to the call given to boycott the courts as a loyal Congressman.

In Rajaji's own words:

"Surely, I can't stand aside resting on the creed of boycott of courts and see this man convicted for insulting religion."



He without breaking the letter of the creed of boycott of the courts, decided to speak in the court as a private gentleman specially requested by the appellant, which procedure was open to every accused person in a criminal case without filing an authorisation by the accused. The court also agreed to this course. Rajaji argued the case and won. The untouchable was acquitted.

Again in the words of Rajaji:

*"The case of a perfectly devoted and earnest pariah (untouchable) rushing into the temple to see the God and offer worship and the police catching him and prosecuting him took me out of the mechanical groove of doctrine"*

Such was the noble character of Rajaji.



## **102. Govind Vallabha Pant (Former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh)**

**G**ovind Vallabha Pant, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, used to keep his personal and State expenses totally separate and all the expenditure incurred on him and his family members were met from his personal money.

Once Pant refused to pass a bill amounting to Rs. 6 and annas 12 towards snacks served with tea at an official meeting on the ground that serving snacks at that meeting was not admissible under the norms. When repeatedly requested Pant taking out the amount from his purse, said:

"Take the amount and pay the bill. I cannot allow payment of the bill from Government money."

Quite in a contrast way, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, alleged in sanctioning Rs. 1.35 crore from the State's Contingency fund to meet the expenses for celebration of her birthday, stating that the Government was organising the birthday!



### **103. Pro-Nature and Pro-People**

**I**n the summer of 1949 the Planning Commission was meeting at the Rashtrapati Bhavan to chalk out a strategy for the economic development of new independent India. One of the participants in the meeting, J.C. Kumarappa, an associate of Mahatma Gandhiji, arrived in a horse drawn tonga and was ordered off the road at the outer entrance of the Rashtrapati Bhavan. He protested and was told that the roads were being cleared for Pandit Nehru and was allowed to pass only after he explained that he had to reach the meeting before Padit Nehru did. The ordeal was repeated at the next two gates. Worse, in spite of an official protest it was repeated the second day when he threatened to come in a bullock cart on the following day. During a discussion on roads in the meeting he raised the issue and said that a bullock cart driver in a democracy was as much a citizen as the Prime Minister and that it was an insult to deny him the use of a public road. Nehru agreed, and he said that every citizen was equal but the said restriction was meant

to protect the cart drivers from accidents in an area with many motorised vehicles. But, Dr. Kumarappa replied that when there are two persons in a public place and the presence of one likely is to be a menace to the other, common sense would lead to restraining the source of danger rather than possible victim! He further suggested that under such circumstances he would instead put up notices saying **MOTOR CARS AND LORRIES NOT ALLOWED** evoking peals of laughter! They have to choose decisions that benefit the larger public instead of the few.



## 104. Rajaji and Books

**O**ne Vasudevaraju wrote a book in Tamil on the Indian Community Development Movement. He requested Rajaji to write a foreword. Rajaji promptly replied.

"I do not write forewords to books now. I wish you would publish the book without any foreword. If you cannot do it please ask Bhakhtavastalam to give one. Bhakhtavastalam was the Chief Minister then. He met him and put in the request. He promptly agreed and sent an excellent foreword.

After publication, Vasudevaraju visited Rajaji at the Kilpauk Garden residence, a modest middle class one, presented the book and sought his comments. Rajaji said he could not do so, as he was preoccupied with translating the Mahabharata into Tamil. Also his eyesight was not good to read books. Vasudevaraju mentioned that the book was a

complimentary copy to a few persons like him. Rajaji told him that there was no use in keeping the book without reading it and asked whether he would take it back, if he returned it with his compliments. And gave back the book with his compliments.

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**Moral :** *Books are intended for reading and should not be possessed when one could not read them.*

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## 105. Human Brotherhood and Harmony

**A**.P.J. Abdul Kalam, President of India, recalls this anecdote in his book **IGNITED MINDS** which is an example of human brotherhood and harmony showed by a Muslim.

"I recall an event that took place in my family. My grandfather and great grandfather were called Ambalakarakar—Noble Leaders—in Rameswaram. This island has the privilege of being known as the place where Lord Rama is said to have launched his campaign against Ravana. The island celebrates this even by organising his marriage with Sita. My grandfather would provide a floating platform for the occasion to carry the decorated vigraha (idol) through the holy tank named Ramar Teerthum. The tank is very deep. The floating platform with vigraha bedecked with beautiful gold ornaments of Lord Rama is taken round a small

mandapa at the centre of the tank. One year my great grandfather was witnessing the event when a mishap took place. The vigraha toppled down and sank. Without any hesitation or prompting he jumped into the tank and recovered the vigraha as the entire town watched. There was a special prayer in the Rameswaram mosque to thank the Almighty for the recovery. I have considered this incident as a shining example of human brotherhood and harmony, between two communities especially significant in today's context.



## 106. **Lame Excuse**

**T**he Union Minister for Human Resource Development Dr. Murali Manohar Joshi was celebrating his birthday.

The Prime Minister Vajpayee, who was present on the occasion, in his characteristic style turned his wit on Mr. Joshi, his political opponents and himself, endearing himself to the gathering which for well over an hour had patiently watched speaker after speaker showered praise on the Minister.

Though Mr. Vajpayee lauded the efforts of his Cabinet colleague in the field of education, he did so after taking a dig at Dr. Joshi for not accepting his call when he telephoned him that morning to greet him on his birthday.

"I was told he was doing pooja and he would call back on finishing his prayers. I know Dr. Joshi offers pooja

regularly, but I also know that people cite prayer as an excuse when they want to avoid somebody!"



## 107. Tilak Controversy

**T**he priests of the Avala Math had applied Tilak on the forehead of the Chief Minister of Kerala, A.K. Antony and the Local Administration Minister, Cherkalam Abdulla, during their visit to the spiritual leader. Mr. Abdulla with a Tilak appeared in the print and electronic media.

The State Committee of the SYS warned that Mr. Abdulla should not enter a mosque since he had applied a Tilak which according to them is un-Islamic. Mr. Panakkad Syed Umerali Shihab Thangal had also asked Mr. Abdulla to offer proper repentance according to the tenets of Islam.

Mr. Abdulla however said that he did not apply the Tilak on his forehead on his own but it was applied by the priests as part of the traditional mode of welcome during his visit to Avala Math in Kasargod on December 9, 2002.

Its youth wing, the National Youth League (NYL) even demanded the resignation of the JUMIL Chief for protecting the Minister.



## 108. Literal Translation

**I**n the Photo identity cards in Saharsa district of Bihar it was noticed that the names were typed in a funny manner. People with Singh as their surname found to their dismay that they had been made as "Lion", which is a literal translation of the word "Singh" in English. A voter Saryu Singh found his name on the card as Saryu Lion, while Panchu Ram had become Five Ram and Basawan Mukhiya as Basawan Headman.

A company from West Bengal, which had been entrusted with the job, translated the names from Hindi to English. literally!



**“Confession of  
errors is like a  
broom which  
sweeps away the  
dirt and leaves the  
surface brighter  
and clearer.  
I feel stronger for  
confession”**

**- Gandhi**







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